United Nations S/PV.4503

Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

Provisional

4503rd meeting

Friday, 29 March 2002, 6 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Kolby	(Norway)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Franco
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Guinea	Mr. Boubacar Diallo
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zínser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Letter dated 29 March from the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/329)

Letter dated 29 March from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/331).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

02-31029 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 6.40 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Letter dated 29 March 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/329)

Letter dated 29 March 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/331)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, Spain and Tunisia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Lancry (Israel) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Baali (Algeria), Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti), Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt), Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Al-Kadhe (Iraq), Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan), Mr. Barg (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mr. Bennouna (Morocco), Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan), Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar), Mr. Arias (Spain) and Mr. Mejdoub (Tunisia) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 29 March 2002 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2002/332 and which reads as follows:

"I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council to be held today, Friday, 29 March 2002, regarding the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the rules of procedure and with previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in response to the request contained in letters dated 29 March 2002 from the Permanent Representatives of Jordan and Qatar to the United Nations, which have been issued as documents S/2002/329 and S/2002/331, respectively.

I should also like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to photocopies of document S/2002/330, dated 28 March 2002, from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations.

I welcome the presence of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and I give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: I have just returned from Beirut, where Arab leaders made a historic decision to embrace Crown Prince Abdullah's peace proposal, which confirmed the possibility of peace in the Middle East and proposed a way forward. And just prior to the Arab League Summit, the Security Council itself passed one of its most significant resolutions on the Middle East, resolution 1397 (2002), which affirmed the vision of two States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side within secure, internationally recognized borders. The international community must do everything possible to advance these efforts. We should not allow terrorism and extremism to prevail over the pursuit of political settlement.

I am deeply alarmed at the rapid escalation of the violence in the Middle East that we have witnessed over the past two days. Horrific terrorist acts — or attacks, if you wish — against Israeli civilians — first

in Netanya and then in Jerusalem — have been carried out. Such attacks are aimed at undermining any prospect for political settlement. I understand the anger of the Israeli Government and people over those attacks. The intention of such attacks, which I have consistently and unreservedly condemned as morally repugnant, is to subvert the possibility of any peaceful settlement. Terrorism will not bring the Palestinian people closer to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

Yet I have also consistently voiced criticism over Israel's use of disproportionate lethal force, especially in civilian populated areas, in response to those attacks. Such use of force will bring neither peace nor security to Israel. Both sides need to adopt policies that reinforce the prospects for a political process leading to peaceful settlement, and eschew actions that make peaceful settlement through negotiations more difficult.

I call on both Prime Minister Sharon and Chairman Arafat to exercise responsible leadership at this time. I would urge that they make every effort to take advantage of the outcome of the Arab League Summit in Beirut, which outlined a widely welcomed vision for full peace in the region. United States Special Envoy Zinni has put forward ceasefire proposals that should be accepted by the Palestinians. Israel should halt its assault on the Palestinian Authority. Destroying the Palestinian Authority will not bring Israel closer to peace.

At times like these it is possible to lose sight of the fact that there is a path away from violence and war. Via the Mitchell recommendations, the parties should move quickly to achieve the two-State vision expressed in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) of 12 March 2002, which is based on the principle of land for peace, and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

In your debate this evening, I would urge you to consider not only the alarming deterioration of the situation on the ground, but also how the international community can help ensure that your resolutions — particularly resolution 1397 (2002) — can become a reality, and how the international community can help the parties get back to the table.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Council is convened today on a High Holy Day, and we do indeed thank you, Mr. President, for your response in convening this meeting to consider the current grave situation. We would also like to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his presence here today, as well as for his constant efforts to end the ongoing tragedy in Palestine, and in the Middle East in general, with a view to establishing peace in the region.

We are gathered today in the wake of a new, insane step taken by Mr. Ariel Sharon and his Government — at a time when the Israeli occupation forces have dispatched their tanks and armoured vehicles, with the support of helicopter gunships, in order to destroy and smash through the headquarters of President Arafat of Palestine, the elected President of the Palestinian National Authority and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Israeli forces have destroyed most of the President's compound, with the exception of the single building in which the President himself remains in the company of a very limited number of his aides. This has put his personal safety at high risk, and talking about guarantees of his personal safety would add insult to pain and suffering. It is unprecedented for occupying forces to use such weaponry to attack a location of this nature. Israel, the occupying Power, has committed grave mistakes against our people. Let me state here that any harm to President Arafat would be the mother of all those mistakes.

Israeli occupation forces have also occupied the city of Ramallah, the largest Palestinian urban centre, as well as reoccupied parts of other Palestinian towns, such as Nablus and Bethlehem, and torn the Gaza Strip into three separate areas. The Israeli Government has also declared Yasser Arafat to be its enemy. Mr. Sharon has declared that the military operation under way will last for weeks.

I must state that this represents the beginning of the destruction of the elected Palestinian Authority and the start of removing Yasser Arafat, the reoccupation of Palestinian territory and, in brief, throwing the situation back to pre-Oslo. This is Mr. Sharon's true political purpose. The man has made no secret of these positions. Time and again he has publicly declared his great hatred for the peace framework agreements in the

context of Oslo. Time and again he has refused to accept a final settlement and has repeatedly declared his rejection, of even the Mitchell recommendations. In point of fact, Mr. Sharon wants to return to the pre-Oslo status and to attempt to create isolated Palestinian entities under local proxy leaders because, briefly, he does not want to put an end to occupation and he is not interested in a genuine, peaceful settlement.

Many of us did not want to see these facts. I am speaking of these political facts that surround the character of Mr. Sharon and his declared positions — I repeat, declared positions — in defiance of the entire international community. This insane Israeli step comes directly on the heels of the 14th Arab Summit Meeting, which was held in Beirut. The participants of the Summit adopted resolutions of landmark significance — resolutions that guarantee a change in the entire situation in the Middle East region — and perhaps this is one of the reasons for the timing of the Israeli actions now. Mr. Sharon tried to frustrate the positive outcome of this Summit by insisting on a military blockade of President Arafat in order to deny him the chance to participate in the Arab Summit. When this failed, the onslaught, in this form, started, and it may kill the positive potential of the Beirut Summit.

In some Israeli quarters it is being said that what is going on is only a reaction to the explosions, the latest of which took place in Netanya, undertaken by Palestinians inside Israel. We in the Palestinian Authority and in the Palestinian leadership have categorically condemned these explosions. And, by the way, we have condemned them not only in English, as some have claimed; indeed, we have condemned them in Arabic as well and, if you wish, will do so in all United Nations languages. These silly interpretations are an insult to the Palestinian people. Our position is clear: we are against such acts because they do not serve Palestinian national interests.

However, Mr. Sharon's Government has indeed destroyed the Palestinian security institutions and has reduced their capabilities to a minimum. On the one hand, the Israeli forces have laid siege to President Arafat and have a stranglehold on the entire Palestinian people. On the other hand, they have called on the Palestinian people to fulfil their obligations. This is perverted logic. It is impossible to comprehend. The Palestinians could put an end to this phenomenon once they feel that there is hope for the future, that the end of Israeli occupation is only a matter of time, that Palestinian statehood is coming and that there is indeed a future for their children rather than a perpetuation of occupation, oppression, siege and the presence of Israeli settlements that destroy the fabric of their lives.

All this notwithstanding, the Palestinian side has tried to deal with the facts on the ground. We have accepted the Mitchell recommendations and, after that, we accepted the Tenet plan. Obviously, however, the Israeli side buried the Mitchell recommendations under a cover provided by some parties. Only yesterday President Arafat declared his willingness to implement a ceasefire and to implement unconditionally the Tenet plan. The other side — and here I appeal to this Council to recognize this — rejected the mere mention of the Mitchell recommendations or their implementation at a point later in time. They made no mention of the Mitchell recommendations. At the same time, they expected the Palestinian side to be convinced that Tenet would lead to Mitchell and all would lead to the resumption of peace talks, which would result in a political solution.

The status quo cannot continue. We cannot turn ourselves into an ostrich that buries its head in the sand; we cannot try to address only the security concerns, as advanced by Mr. Sharon. This will not be possible without a political framework. This will not be possible without a promise to put an end to occupation.

Once again, I wish to pay tribute to the position set forth time and again by the United Nations Secretary-General in terms of the need to address the situation on the ground and to address the security question in a political context. Disregarding the Secretary-General's call and continuing the attempt to serve Mr. Sharon's goals will lead nowhere.

We came to the Security Council convinced that the Council has responsibilities under the Charter that it must uphold. This is a matter of principle. We also came to the Council in order to affirm the need for the Security Council to follow up the implementation of its resolution 1397 (2002), the landmark resolution cited by the Secretary-General which has yet to be implemented, despite some positive indications from certain Israeli quarters. The Israeli Government has neither issued any official position on that resolution nor stated its commitment to fulfilling its provisions.

The Palestinian side has done so and is still waiting for the Israeli side to state its position in that regard.

We, too, want this Council to address the extremely grave situation created by Mr. Sharon and the Israeli occupation forces since daybreak yesterday, Palestine time. Specifically, we want this Council to issue an order halting acts of aggression and for Israeli forces to withdraw from Palestinian towns, including Ramallah, as a first step towards the implementation of the Tenet plan and the Mitchell recommendations. This is the central issue at this moment — in addition, of course, to the Council's affirmation of its traditional support for the peace process and for the efforts of the Secretary-General and of the special envoys to the Middle East, be they those of the Secretary-General, the United States, the Russian Federation or the European Union.

This is what we expect from the Security Council; indeed, we have distributed a Palestinian text to all members of the Council in the hope that it will receive their support. We further hope that the Council will also, swiftly and expeditiously, take the necessary measures to make its own contribution to halting the deterioration of the situation on the ground and to helping restore conditions to a positive track. This is the natural role of the Security Council and what we hope will be achieved.

The entire Middle East needs the Council's action, especially given the promise of peace emanating from Beirut. This will require specific action to dispel the threat of war currently looming over the heart of the city of Ramallah.

The President: I now call on the representative of Israel.

Mr. Lancry (Israel): At the outset, I would like to welcome Secretary-General Kofi Annan and to express my gratitude for his unshakeable faith in peace and for his statement, delivered moments ago, in which he indeed expressed this vision and this faith.

The latest horrific acts of Palestinian terrorism are occurring as Jews throughout Israel and throughout the world celebrate Passover, the festival of freedom. The Passover massacre on Wednesday, which has claimed the lives of 22 innocent civilians and injured well over 100, occurred as 250 people sat down to enjoy their festive Seder meal at the Park Hotel in the coastal city of Netanya. The attacker, Mr. Odeh, was a man whom Israel has been requesting Palestinian security forces to arrest for involvement in terrorist activities for some four years.

Before and since that reprehensible massacre just 48 hours ago, which the world has watched in horror, there have been yet more acts of terrorism. A Palestinian policeman gunned down two members of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, injuring a third. A 16-year-old Palestinian girl blew herself up at a Jerusalem supermarket, killing two shoppers and injuring many more. A family of four in Alon Moreh was gunned down by a Hamas gunman. Many of these acts were committed by members of the Al-Aksa Brigade, the military wing of Chairman Arafat's own Fatah movement, over which he exercises direct responsibility. In all, since General Zinni's arrival in the region, 49 Israelis have been killed; in the month of March alone, 102 Israelis have been murdered.

This, then, has been the Palestinian leadership's response to Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) and to the mission of United States Special Envoy Anthony Zinni and the visit of Vice-President Dick Cheney to the region. These measures were designed to bring about a ceasefire and to enable the parties to implement the Tenet plan and the Mitchell Committee recommendations to pave the way to a political settlement.

For its part, Israel took clear and specific steps to ensure that these measures would succeed. We welcomed resolution 1397 (2002), both in the vision that it endorsed and in the concrete details it outlined to bring an end to the violence, terrorism and incitement. It is not included in my written statement, but if Ambassador Al-Kidwa should somehow remain doubtful, I would be more than happy to send him the official statement of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres on behalf of the Israeli Government. Maybe it will convince him that we have, in a genuine way, embraced both the vision and the concrete details of Security Council resolution 1397 (2002). I say this in a spontaneous way in the English that I practice, according to Ambassador Al-Kidwa.

Israel withdrew its troops from territories under Palestinian control. Prime Minister Sharon declared that Israel would not insist on seven days of quiet before entering the Tenet and Mitchell process, and we have accepted the compromise proposals presented by

Special Envoy Zinni to begin the implementation of the Tenet plan.

Everyone is aware — contrary to the assertions of my colleague, Ambassador Al-Kidwa — that Israel has accepted, and has declared its acceptance, of Mitchell and Tenet in full. If any more proof were needed of Israel's unequivocal commitment to a ceasefire and to a political settlement, it could be found in the support expressed for certain promising aspects of the Arab summit peace proposal and in the fact that in the past week, despite continued terrorist attacks, including a devastating suicide bombing at a Jerusalem café, we continued to show maximum restraint and withheld any response.

But Israel cannot walk alone on the path leading to a cessation of violence and a resumption of political dialogue. Throughout this entire period, the voice of the Palestinian leadership has not been one of moderation; it has been a voice of terrorism. Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority have failed to take even the most minimal steps to end the violence and terrorism, in blatant disregard of the will of the international community, including resolution 1397 (2002). Despite that most fundamental obligation, which Chairman Arafat accepted at the beginning of the Oslo process, to renounce terrorism and resolve all disputes by peaceful means, Chairman Arafat has made it abundantly clear, both through his actions and his inaction, that the murder of innocent Israeli civilians is legitimate and desirable, that somehow terrorism and dialogue can live side by side.

The glorification of suicide bombings against innocent civilians — targeted precisely because they are innocent — the rejection of envoy Zinni's proposals and the continuing failure to arrest known terrorists enjoying protection and support in Palestinian territory and in the presidential compound of Chairman Arafat, are but some of the signs that Chairman Arafat has no intention of reaching a peaceful settlement.

What is Israel to do in the face of these deliberate massacres of its civilians and the abject failure of the Palestinian leadership to fulfil its most basic moral and legal commitments? At a time when the world has come to realize to dangers of terrorism and the dangers of appeasing terrorists, can there be any doubt as to the right and fundamental duty of States to protect their civilians from this deadly scourge?

Are we supposed to find comfort in the most recent feeble call by Chairman Arafat, which is accompanied not by concrete measures but by calls to martyrdom? Is this any different from the 11 other ceasefire initiatives which Chairman Arafat brazenly violated, affirming his infamous practice of double talk, by which he seeks to placate his Western audience on the one hand, while stoking the flames of hatred and terror on the other?

In these circumstances, Israel is compelled to take the measures Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian leadership have steadfastly refused to take. We will exercise our basic right of self-defence and target the vast terrorist infrastructure that the Palestinian Authority continues to nurture and sustain in its territory. In doing so, we will take all necessary measures to minimize harm to innocent civilians. In doing so, we will make clear that there can be no tolerance for terrorism, which deliberately targets the innocent; that terrorism and peace cannot coexist; that they are, simply, each other's enemies.

We have no intention of occupying any territory under Palestinian control; our intention is to uproot the terrorist network that exists there. And in doing so, we will, as we always have done, keep our hand outstretched for peace.

To the Palestinian people we say, once again, that if the vision outlined in resolution 1397 (2002) is your goal, then peace is no illusion. That vision, as we do remember, was reached at Camp David, and it can unfold in the future. We can walk that road together — through dialogue, not through confrontation. But the Palestinian leadership, and the terrorist organizations flourishing in its territory, send Israelis and the world a very different message. Every suicide bombing, every glorified martyr, every terrorist released from a Palestinian jail, every parent that wishes her son or daughter to grow up to kill Jews, undermines that vision and hurts the Palestinian cause and the cause of peace.

To the international community we say, once again, that we must make it absolutely clear that terrorism can never be tolerated. The focus must be — can only be — on the complete de-legitimization of terrorism as a means to achieve political ends. If we are serious about the war on terror, we must condemn it wherever it breeds. What incentive do we give the Palestinian leadership to renounce terror as a strategy,

when we tolerate terrorism and focus attention on those defending against it rather than those perpetrating it? What dangerous power do we give extremists throughout the world if we create the impression that their deadly methods can succeed?

Events have shown that international pressure on the Palestinian leadership to end terrorism can yield results. Chairman Arafat, with a 40,000-strong police force, can be convinced to fight terrorism. But for that to happen, for peace for Israelis and Palestinians to have a chance, the message to Chairman Arafat must be clear, comprehensive and unrelenting.

Let us hope, at least, that the Palestinian people themselves will heed this call and demand of their leaders to finally live up to their most basic responsibilities.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Turkey in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Cengizer (Turkey) took a seat at the side of the Council Chamber.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): Ireland fully associates itself with the statement to be made shortly by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union.

It is now impossible to exaggerate the gravity of the situation in the Middle East. It is, in the most fundamental sense, a threat to international peace and security and to the well-being and security of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples and of the peoples of the region.

In resolution 1397 (2002), the Council, only a couple of weeks ago, affirmed a vision of a region where two States — Israel and Palestine — would live, side by side, within secure and recognized borders.

Since we adopted that resolution, the situation in the region has gravely deteriorated. Acts of violence, terror and the excessive use of military force have created a vicious circle of violence and counter-violence, reprisal and counter-reprisal. It is perfectly clear that the parties are now trapped and cannot emerge without outside help.

The Prime Minister of Ireland, Mr. Bertie Ahern, earlier today issued a statement appealing to the Israeli Government and the Palestinian authorities and to their respective peoples to pull back from conflict. The Prime Minister called for an immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories controlled by the Palestinian Authority and for an end to Israeli harassment of President Arafat.

Mr. Ahern appealed for an end to all acts of violence and terror, and he condemned in the strongest possible terms the continuing attacks against Israeli civilians. He called on all parties concerned to declare an immediate ceasefire and to commence the implementation of the Tenet and Mitchell proposals, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) of 12 March 2002.

I should add that Prime Minister Ahern conveyed this position to President Arafat this evening when they spoke by telephone. He expressed concern for the unacceptable situation in which President Arafat has been placed, and he appealed to him, notwithstanding the restrictions placed on him, to do all in his power to prevent further violence.

Ireland utterly condemns the Netanya terrorist attack and the other atrocities committed against Israeli civilians. As our Secretary-General just said to the Council, such actions only subvert prospects for a political settlement. These acts of terrorism must end, and they must end now.

It should — to put it at its mildest — be entirely clear by now to all sides that no solution can be found through terrorism or any other form of violence or through military action. Ireland regards the current Israeli military actions, including in Ramallah, as deeply dangerous and unwise. Whatever the provocations, they serve only to exacerbate bitterness and alienation among the Palestinian people.

President Arafat is, and will remain, the only possible interlocutor for Israel in any process of dialogue leading to an end to violence and to negotiations on a political settlement. He cannot fulfil this role if he is not allowed to fulfil it, by acts of

gratuitous insult and humiliation and by his enforced physical isolation.

Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) represents the only way forward: immediate cessation of all acts of violence and both sides to cooperate in the implementation of the Tenet work plan and the Mitchell report recommendations.

The international community, the Secretary-General, the quartet and General Zinni, in his current mission, all are working to help resolve the current tragic cycle of violence. To help resolve the impasse, however, they must be allowed to help, and they must be listened to.

My delegation calls on the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to pull back now from the brink and for agreement on an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. There are signs of hope. Yesterday's proposals by Arab League leaders are an extremely important and positive development, as the Secretary-General stressed tonight. But without restraint and the strongest political will on both sides, such efforts by the international community or regional leaders will remain only that — only hopes in an uncontrolled and uncontrollable spiral of violence.

An end to violence is now the immediate imperative. Beyond that, in the spirit of resolution 1397 (2002), there is a vital need for both sides to recognize that a peace process must involve partnership and that only through political negotiations and a political settlement can both parties at last learn to coexist side by side , at peace with each other.

Both sides must now rise to the challenge of ending the violence and building the peace. For our part, the wider international community must leave no action untaken in helping to end the pursuit of a path that can lead only to catastrophe and in helping the parties to begin again the process of dialogue and negotiations.

All, including the Council, who are in a position to help the parties to emerge from this grave crisis must maintain their engagement to this end.

Mr. Boubacar Diallo (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the holding of this emergency public meeting on the grave situation in the Middle East, which the Secretary-General described in his statement and which requires no elaboration.

The suicide attacks by certain Palestinian groups and the attack by the Israeli army against the headquarters of Chairman Arafat attest to the need for urgent and coordinated action on the part of the Security Council and for the unconditional implementation of resolution 1397 (2002).

In this respect, the Council must, in exercising its responsibilities, reaffirm its steadfast dedication to a vision of a region in which two States — Palestine and Israel — coexist side by side within recognized and secure borders.

The question of security and that of a political settlement of the conflict are, in our opinion, indissociable. My delegation therefore asks Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Sharon to ensure that the ceasefire is respected and to abide by the relevant Security Council resolutions.

My delegation takes note of the adoption at the Beirut Arab Summit of a peace plan for the settlement of the Middle East situation in general. That plan is based on the principle of land for peace and should, in our opinion, facilitate a return to the negotiating table.

In this context, our delegation will spare no effort in the process of enabling the Council to define the elements of a common action that is commensurate with the tremendous challenge that confronts us all.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): France fully associates itself with the statement to be made shortly by the Ambassador of Spain on behalf of the European Union.

The situation in the Middle East is exceptionally serious. The highest authorities in France today expressed their deepest concern at the tragic turn events have taken. France calls for the immediate cessation of all forms of violence and terror, the cessation of hostilities and the conclusion without delay of a ceasefire between Palestinians and Israelis.

France asks Chairman Arafat to take all necessary measures to put an end to violence and acts of terror. France asks Prime Minister Sharon to put an end without delay to the military operations carried out by the Israeli forces, which should begin a withdrawal.

Nothing can justify the killing of innocent civilians. The Netanya attack and the Jerusalem attack today should be condemned with horror. As the Secretary-General has recalled on several occasions,

terrorist attacks are morally repugnant and hateful. We express our compassion and deep condolences to all of the victims and to their families.

The Palestinian Authority has the responsibility to do everything in its power to combat terrorism, but it can do so only if its capacities are maintained and it is not weakened. Yasser Arafat can act only if one gives him the means with which to act.

The French authorities are convinced that the reaction of Prime Minister Sharon and of his Government in response to the attacks is leading to a disastrous cycle of violence and to a tragic impasse. All-out repression, the excessive use of force, collective punishment against an entire people — a people that has been enclosed and humiliated — and the relentless harassment of Yasser Arafat, who is the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, is fuelling an endless spiral of violence. Those acts are unacceptable.

The action that began this morning in Ramallah and several other West Bank towns must cease. Israeli forces must begin their withdrawal. The physical integrity and personal safety of the President of the Palestinian Authority must be protected, and his full freedom of movement must be restored. Action against humanitarian and medical institutions and personnel and especially against ambulances is unjustifiable. All must be guaranteed access to medical care and emergency medical services.

France has said, and we repeat, that peace cannot be attained by force of arms. There is no military solution. To cling solely to a security approach is an illusion and a trap. The situation will remain at an impasse as long as the Israeli Government refuses, in parallel with its security measures, to undertake political negotiations leading to the creation of an independent, viable and democratic Palestinian State. Security aspects and the settlement of political must be addressed head-on. Terrorism must be combated as if there were no peace negotiations; peace negotiations must be conducted as if there were no terrorism.

The highest French authorities welcomed the Arab summit statement adopted yesterday at Beirut, entitled an Arab peace initiative and inspired by the proposals of Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. That statement is a historic contribution to a peaceful future for the Middle East. It outlines the prospect of a comprehensive and lasting peace based on the normalization of relations between all Arab States and Israel in exchange for a complete end to Israeli occupation of the territories conquered in 1967, in line with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and with the principle of land for peace.

For the immediate future, France urgently calls upon the parties to demonstrate wisdom. Leaders on both sides have a cardinal responsibility to put an end to the escalation of violence and to pursue peace. The international community must help them to achieve this. We welcome and encourage diplomatic efforts undertaken on all sides; these should be stepped up. We hope that the United States will re-engage itself still further. The European Union is increasingly active, particularly in the context of the "quartet", which is tirelessly pursuing its efforts in the region.

Two weeks ago the Security Council adopted resolution 1397 (2002) which, inter alia, demanded immediate cessation of all acts of violence. That resolution must be implemented. Arms must not have the last word; the parties must return to the path of reason and the path of peace. In these tragic circumstances, the Security Council must forcefully remind them of this.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this public meeting at such short notice. I should like to acknowledge the presence of the Secretary-General and to thank him for the very good statement he made. My delegation associates itself with that statement and supports it fully.

The situation in the Middle East has clearly gone out of control. We have had the opportunity here on several occasions to say that the vicious circle of unabated violence can only lead to a full-fledged war in the Middle East. The acts of terror which have befallen innocent Israeli civilians, followed by the Israeli military actions on Chairman Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah, are fast taking us to full-scale war. It is extremely important therefore for the Security Council to act collectively to bring the two parties to their senses.

Let me express in the strongest terms my delegation's condemnation of all acts of terror, especially against innocent civilians.

These events are happening at a juncture when the initiative of Crown Prince Abdullah has been

adopted by the Arab summit at Beirut; that initiative provides some very important light at the end of a very long tunnel. They are happening at a time when the Security Council has just adopted resolution 1397 (2002), setting out the vision of a Palestinian State living side by side with Israel.

The Secretary-General, in his statement to the press today and in his statement a short time ago in this Chamber, rightly said that those who perpetrated the recent terrorist acts, killing innocent civilians, are extremists and the enemies of peace. We wonder, however, whether the actions taken by Prime Minister Sharon, who claims, together with many others, that he is acting in the self-defence of his country and of its citizens, will or can lead to an end to terrorist activities. The disproportionate use of force and the siege of several cities and of the headquarters of Chairman Arafat, instead of curbing acts of terrorism — which, as many are aware, are considered acts of martyrdom by the Palestinians — will in fact cause them to take on wider proportions.

One cannot expect a leader to exercise control over his people when he is himself under siege and when he is made to undergo the worst forms of humiliation.

In a statement that the Foreign Minister of Mauritius made to the press today, he stated that Mauritius was horrified by the escalation of violence and by the Israeli action against Chairman Arafat, which we consider to be acts of provocation. He called on the two sides and on the two leaders to exercise maximum restraint and to act towards the implementation of the Tenet plan and the recommendations of the Mitchell report.

The senseless decision to attack Chairman Arafat's Ramallah headquarters and Prime Minister Sharon's decision to isolate Chairman Arafat are totally inadmissible, appalling and unwise. Prime Minister Sharon recently mentioned that he regretted his earlier commitment not to hurt Chairman Arafat; such humiliation of Chairman Arafat will have extremely negative repercussions on the peace process and is likely to further infuriate the Palestinians.

The United States Secretary of State, Mr. Powell, today said that Chairman Arafat is the leader of the Palestinian people and that his leadership is now even more central to trying to find a way out of this tragic situation. We fully share and support that assessment. It is therefore extremely important that Chairman Arafat be strengthened rather than weakened. Let me also say that, in the view of my delegation, Chairman Arafat remains the only interlocutor with whom Israel can negotiate peace. We call upon Prime Minister Sharon and Chairman Arafat to renounce violence and to take the bold step that would bring them to the negotiating table. There cannot be peace until the two protagonists resume negotiations towards a political settlement of the Middle East issue based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

We fully support the work currently being undertaken by General Zinni and the other special envoys, and we sincerely hope that their efforts will not be deterred by the recent incidents.

We believe that it is time for the Security Council to consider ways and means to translate the vision enshrined in resolution 1397 (2002) into reality. We suggest that a special group of influential world leaders be set up. That group, together with the Secretary-General, could work towards the creation of an independent Palestinian State, as spelled out in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) and based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): The Permanent Representative of Spain will speak on behalf of the European Union later in this debate, and I fully associate myself with the statement he will make then.

It is right that the Council should be meeting in emergency session this evening. The situation is extremely critical for the millions of people who live in Israel and the occupied territories. Israelis and Palestinians should benefit from having the views of the Council, the Secretary-General — to whom I am very grateful for the statement he made at the beginning of tonight's debate — and the wider membership tonight.

Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) sets out the key elements of the way forward. That resolution was a clear demonstration of the Council's will, and it should be acted upon. The key elements include a vision of a region where two States — Israel and Palestine — live side by side within secure and recognized borders; an immediate cessation of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction; and a call upon the Israeli and Palestinian sides and their leaders to cooperate in the implementation of the Tenet work plan and the

Mitchell report recommendations, with the aim of resuming negotiations on a political settlement. The United Kingdom stands foursquare behind resolution 1397 (2002). Both sides must take action to ensure that it becomes a reality.

As the Secretary-General said earlier today, the way out of this escalating and vicious cycle of reprisals and counter-violence is for both parties to move ahead as speedily as possible, via the Mitchell recommendations, to achieve the two-State vision expressed in resolution 1397 (2002). We, like others who have spoken tonight, support the ongoing efforts by General Zinni, the Secretary-General, the European Union and others to assist the parties to halt the violence and resume the peace process.

The Arab Summit in Beirut earlier this week presented a new opportunity. We welcome its endorsement of Crown Prince Abdullah's initiative and urge Israel to respond positively to the assurances Arab States have offered on its future security. A comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East is attainable based on relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The Arab Summit outcome strengthens the consensus on the broad outlines of a settlement. But the events of the last few days show that never has there been a greater need for restraint to be shown on both sides. Restraint in the face of violence is a sign of courage, not weakness.

It can only be through negotiation that there will ever be a peaceful future for Israel, Palestine and the people of the entire region. A lasting settlement remains frustratingly elusive. The simple fact of geography means that both sides will have to live together in peace. Restraint and statesmanship are required, and all forms of violence must end immediately. These should be the Council's messages to the two sides tonight.

Mr. Cunningham (United States): Just a little more than two weeks ago, the Council took a very important step when it adopted resolution 1397 (2002). Others have referred to its importance. That resolution contains a number of valuable elements. Among other things, it calls for an immediate halt to terror and violence. That call has been ignored by those who would obstruct efforts to achieve a ceasefire and work toward peace. The few optimistic signs that developed in the last two weeks have been endangered once again by terror.

We should be perfectly clear in our discussion tonight: it is terrorism — repeated brutal acts of terrorism — perpetrated against innocent civilians by those who oppose peace that has brought the situation to the current extremely grave and dangerous state. Both Israeli and Palestinian hopes for a peaceful future are under attack by this terror. As Secretary Powell said earlier today, once again, terrorism that targets innocent civilians has dealt a serious blow to the effort to achieve a ceasefire and to find a political solution to the crisis in the Middle East. Terrorists have set back the vision of the Palestinian people for a State that would live in peace side by side with Israel.

We condemn the acts of terrorism perpetrated by Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. We reiterate our calls on Chairman Arafat to bring the perpetrators and their supporters to justice. All those who support peace must reinforce this message, from whatever region. There is no other way forward.

In recent weeks there was cause for some guarded optimism. Last fall, President Bush set out his vision at the United Nations for a Palestinian State living side by side in peace with a Jewish State. We saw positive reaction to the speech that Secretary Powell gave in Louisville. The United Nations passed an important Security Council resolution, resolution 1397 (2002), which was introduced by the United States. The resolution went through the Security Council with a vote of 14 to 0, and only one abstention. This resolution, importantly, set out a vision for the future and established an outline for progress. The Arab Summit in Beirut earlier this week, while it did not provide a complete solution, laid out a vision that was put forward by Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and was embraced by all Arab nations. We strongly welcomed that. Prime Minister Sharon in recent weeks showed flexibility with respect to conditions he had previously held to with respect to what it would take to get started on the Tenet work plan. Both sides welcomed General Zinni's return to get the work plan started, which would then lead to the Mitchell process and the political solution and political discussion and negotiation that all of us are hoping for. Vice-President Cheney travelled in the region and was prepared to see Chairman Arafat if circumstances had permitted.

So there was some reason for guarded optimism. Let us be clear about what has brought it all to a halt: terrorism on the part of those who target innocent civilians with the explicit purpose of destroying hopes for peace.

The United States is gravely concerned at the very dangerous situation in Ramallah. We deplore the killing and wounding of innocent Palestinian civilians, just as we condemn the killing of innocent Israeli civilians as a result of terrorist attacks. We understand that Israel has a right to self-defence, but we call on Prime Minister Sharon and his Government to carefully consider the consequences of their actions. Chairman Arafat is the leader of the Palestinian people and his leadership is now, and will be, central to any meaningful effort to restore calm. We have made clear to the Israeli Government that he should not be harmed.

The Security Council, my Government and the international community have endorsed a vision of two States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace. That vision must not be defeated by a small minority dedicated solely to death and destruction. There is a positive way forward, as the Secretary-General has explained. We must move forward, but the cycle of violent action and reaction in the Middle East must stop.

The United States is pressing to bring about a ceasefire, and General Zinni remains in the region engaged in that very effort. Despite the events of these past few days, he will work hard to get the parties to implement the Tenet security work plan and to move further toward the resumption of a political process. We urge both parties to cooperate fully with General Zinni to put in place immediately a lasting ceasefire and to take the steps that will bring tangible benefits to both peoples. That is the only solution to the crisis before us.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is seriously concerned that the Palestinian and Israeli confrontation — and the situation in the region as a whole — is now on the brink of the most severe crisis and severe escalation that we have seen. If we do not break this vicious cycle of terror and retribution, and even greater acts of violence and terrorism, then the Middle East will be on the brink of a new full-scale war.

We regret that the recent terrorist actions and the massive Israeli Army actions provide the backdrop to what has happened recently — that is, the promising steps that have been taken to ensure a ceasefire and an end to the violence. We are convinced that, in these circumstances, all those who are looking for a way out of the confrontation between Israel and Palestine and who are looking towards restoring the negotiating process must show a maximum of political will in an effort to avert further degradation of the situation and to end the real threat of war in the region.

We call on the leadership of the Palestinian Authority to take vigorous steps to put an end to the actions of extremists and to punish those who participate in terrorist acts. We call on the Israeli Government to show restraint and not resort to massive retaliation, and to refrain from steps that could further destabilize the situation in the region. Only in this way will it be possible to stabilize the situation.

A major thrust of these efforts must remain for the Israelis and the Palestinians to comply with the Tenet plan and the Mitchell report recommendations, as indicated in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), on a political settlement that must be based on the principles of international law. We must not allow further emasculation of what we have gained through a lot of work in the last few months. In spite of the "crisis logic", we must not lose the momentum of the peacekeeping potential, in particular the decisions taken at the Beirut Arab League Summit.

Russia, as a participant in the peace process and a member of the quartet of international mediators, will continue its useful work with the parties in order to achieve agreement on a ceasefire, normalization of the situation and renewal of constructive negotiations on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the land-for-peace formula.

We believe the current situation demands that the Security Council send a clear signal to both sides and call on them to effect a ceasefire and renew their political dialogue.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): We have listened carefully to the debate so far. Having done so, we are struck by three paradoxes, the first of which is that this weekend, as several speakers have commented, is one of the world's holiest weekends: Passover, Good Friday, Easter. This holy weekend is being celebrated at one of the world's holiest sites. At this moment, we

should be seeing celebrations or reflections of peace. Instead, we see an extremely high level of violence.

This is not a normal situation. We suggest that perhaps the time has come for both the Council and the international community to reflect — and to reflect in a very profound fashion — on how we have reached this incredible point this weekend.

The second paradox is that in real terms we have probably never been closer to achieving a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. As several speakers have said today, resolution 1397 (2002) was clearly a landmark decision. We have also recently seen the endorsement of the Saudi peace plan by the Arab Summit in Beirut. There are many conversations about the Middle East peace process taking place within the United Nations community — conversations in this public room and those in the corridors. From the conversations in the corridors it is very clear that when we talk about what a comprehensive peace settlement will look like, we all refer to these developments — that is, resolution 1397 (2002) and the Saudi peace plan. Yet, having come so far in terms of generating this international consensus, we once again seem to be moving further away from real peace.

There is a third paradox. Again, listening to statements made so far, we are struck by how much more unified the Council has become on the issue of the Middle East in recent months. This has been demonstrated most clearly by the adoption of resolution 1397 (2002). A more unified Council should have brought us closer to, rather than further away from, peace. But the mere fact that we are holding this extraordinary meeting on this weekend demonstrates how small an impact the Council has on the real situation on the ground. We believe that the time has come for the Council to assume its responsibilities.

Today, despite the grave tragedies and the great dangers facing us, we have heard many voices of reason here. Singapore is a small — not a big — voice in the Council. But we would like to add our small voice to the voices of reason in the hope that they will have an accumulated effect on our deliberations.

In this spirit, we would like to suggest four points for the Council when it reacts to the latest developments. The first is that we must condemn all of the violence and make the point loudly and clearly that violence is not the solution. Our second point is that, in order to ensure our sending a clear signal that violence is not the solution, we must not allow the extreme measures being taken by both sides — extreme measures which clearly, as everyone has said here, exacerbate the situation and damage and derail the peace process — to dictate how we go from here.

The third point is that we should build on the positive developments we have seen in recent weeks. We should build on resolution 1397 (2002), and we should build on the positive outcome of the recent Beirut Summit. We should ensure that these positive developments are not lost.

The fourth point is that the Security Council must react and react — we would like to stress — in a unified fashion to the latest developments. We realize that sometimes it is difficult to get the Council to take unified positions on the Middle East question. But one way out that we have is to build on the careful statements made by the Secretary-General in previous weeks, this morning and in his latest statement. Sometimes it appears that there is no viable middle ground on the Middle East question. But the Secretary-General's careful and well-balanced statements demonstrate that we can develop such middle ground, and we hope that the Security Council will build on the Secretary-General's statements.

Mr. Franco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to express our deep concern over the escalation of violence in the Middle East. The situation has spun out of control, as recent events demonstrate. We emphatically condemn the terrible act of terror in Netanya and other recent acts that have caused the death of an excessive number of civilians. In making this condemnation, we call into question and reject the disproportionate use of force by Israel. The actions taken in Ramallah by the armed forces of Israel do not contribute in any way either to establishing a process that generates the conditions for security or to finding a political solution to this spiral of violence.

We are thoroughly convinced, as the Secretary-General has said, that this escalation fuels the arguments of the extremists; it empowers their cause in an unacceptable manner. The political context necessary to put an end to this cycle of violence between Palestinians and Israelis has evolved favourably in recent days. There are some political events deserving of our support, since they provide the most visible reason to hope that the situation will evolve in the direction we all wish. We are referring,

first, to the outcome of the Arab Summit in Beirut, which has set out a vision for a definitive solution to the conflict. We are also referring to the role played by the "Quartet" and, in particular, to the political importance that we all attach to the activities of General Anthony Zinni, the Special Envoy of the United States. Thirdly, we would like to refer to the validity of the Mitchell and Tenet plans and the Council's recognition of them as possible solutions to the spiral of violence. Finally, we refer to resolution 1397 (2002), adopted on 12 March, which demonstrated that unity on the Security Council does indeed have a desirable impact.

Unfortunately, the positive developments in the political context have not been enough to halt the cycle of violence or to create conditions for security. That is why it is clear to us now that if we, as the Security Council and as responsible members of the international community, are not capable of protecting this political environment, we will be faced with an escalation of a magnitude we do not want to imagine.

We would like to join the other members of the Security Council and the Secretary-General in calling on the parties to completely cease and desist from all acts of violence and in calling in particular on Israel to respect the physical integrity of President Yasser Arafat and to withdraw from occupied territories, especially from Ramallah, thereby recognizing the political importance of the Palestinian Authority and of its leader as the valid interlocutor in finding a definitive solution to this conflict.

Our actions, individually and collectively, must contribute to strengthening the political environment to which I referred earlier and be part of a well-concerted international effort leading to a sustainable ceasefire and to the return of the parties to the negotiating table.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico wishes to express it most vigorous rejection of and deep concern at the acts of violence and aggression of the last few days and hours, which have even further worsened the situation in the Middle East.

Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), adopted in this Chamber less than a month ago, is unambiguous. It demands of both parties the immediate cessation of all acts of violence, including any acts of terrorism, provocation, incitement and destruction. The Security Council's demand, along with many other appeals from the international community, have gone unheeded by the parties. This disregard is intolerable. Extremism has gained control of the situation. The suicidal acts of Palestinian militants in Netanya and Jerusalem, which have taken the lives of innocent Israeli civilians during Christian Easter and Jewish Passover, are, in the exact words of the Secretary-General, repugnant acts. Nothing can justify them.

Mexico believes in the cause of the Palestinian people and today reiterates that conviction. We are certain that history will accord a place to a Palestinian State, and we firmly believe, as resolution 1397 (2002) states, that such a Palestinian State and the State of Israel must and will be able to live side by side within secure and recognized borders. However, this vision cannot become reality by means of terrorism and aggression against innocent civilians, those same civilians with whom the Palestinians will have to live in peace.

Mexico also supports the right and demand of Israel to live within secure borders. We believe that secure borders are not fortified borders. They are not borders of hate, but of peace and understanding. Security must be understood and built in the Middle East by going well beyond military conceptions and measures. Nothing justifies Israel's disproportionate and sterile use of force and its siege of the civilian population and of the headquarters of the Palestinian National Authority. Israel is wrong, and there is irrefutable proof if it believes that peace can be achieved through fire — fire, as the Secretary-General has repeatedly said, for which the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian Authority bear equal responsibility.

The Palestinian Authority needs respect today more than ever, because it is with that entity that Israel will have to sign a peace agreement. The Palestinian Authority must, in turn efficiently and consistently prevent any further suicidal acts by Palestinian extremists and it must renounce violence. Israeli troops must not go any further. The reasonable course of action is for Israeli troops to withdraw from Palestinian cities, including Ramallah.

This has been reiterated again and again by the international community, but no one has yet responded to its civilizing appeal or paid heed to this or any resolution of the Security Council. Israelis and Palestinians alike are in contempt of and failing their peoples and the international community. Mexico therefore yet again joins the Secretary-General in his

calls on both sides to take measures of effective leadership to end the violence.

In this respect, Mexico firmly believes in the Tenet plan and considers that the recommendations in the Mitchell report provide a course of action that the parties can no longer delay in taking. In recent days, world public opinion has placed great hopes in the efforts of the United States Special Envoy to achieve a ceasefire and to relaunch the dialogue. Those efforts must not falter and cannot fail.

The summit meeting of the League of Arab States in Beirut, and in particular its endorsement of the Saudi initiative offering Israel a peaceful arrangement with its neighbours, have also revived hopes that the building of bridges of understanding between Arabs and Israelis has begun. We regret that these efforts have not been echoed by those most directly responsible for exercising leadership and acting wisely.

Only yesterday, President Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority expressed his acceptance of a ceasefire, but his words are not enough. Israel has in turn expressed its intention to seek peace, but its actions contradict its words. Both are locked into the logic of extreme violence, reprisals and intimidation. This is the logic of hatred, death and destruction. There is no exit to this logic; it is endless.

Both parties must make an effort to break this vicious cycle. One gesture of generosity, good sense or self-restraint could unleash a similar and concomitant gesture from the other. An olive branch from one side might flower into understanding. Someone has to take the first step; someone has to plant that seed.

The Security Council must take action. If resolution 1397 (2002) is to be effective, the Security Council must act with clarity and break through the deafness. The Council's hands must not be tied by a sterile debate of mutual recrimination or by a competition to identify the guiltiest party at any particular moment. The Security Council must proceed jointly and as one. Its actions must be directed towards exploring mechanisms that will make its resolutions effective and provide genuine and energetic support for those in the Middle East who seek peace.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): As an associate member of the European Union, Bulgaria fully endorses the statement to be made by the Ambassador of Spain on behalf of the Union.

Less than a month ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 1397 (2002) with near unanimity. Great hopes were born at that time, which were followed by a certain initial decline in the violence in the Middle East and by some encouraging signs on the ground. I point to the resolute mission of General Zinni and of the efforts made by the European Union and other important stakeholders on the diplomatic scene in the Middle East. I also point, of course, to the Beirut summit, which endorsed the peace plan of Crown Prince Abdullah.

For the time being, however, it would seem that the enemies of peace have gained the upper hand. The terrorist attacks in the Israeli cities of Netanya and Jerusalem were victories for the extremists. Bulgaria strongly condemns these terrorist acts and reiterates its position of unequivocal condemnation of terrorism from any quarter and for any motive — political, economic or religious. As the Secretary-General said earlier in his outstanding statement, these are morally repugnant acts.

Bulgaria, while acknowledging Israel's right to respond to terror, appeals to it to show restraint in the current very difficult circumstances. We call on the Israeli authorities not to use violence and above all to respect the physical integrity and freedom of movement of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, who, as the democratically elected leader of the Palestinian people, remains the interlocutor in any political process.

In these circumstances, the watchword for both sides must be "restraint", as previous speakers have urged. The Tenet plan and the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee point the way out of the current crisis. I would refer yet again to resolution 1397 (2002), which is not only outstanding for its endorsement of the vision of two States living in peace and security in the Middle East, but is also important for our Council, which has for so long been virtually unanimous on the question of the Middle East.

My delegation is prepared to continue to work towards the unity of the Council on the question of the Middle East, because unity alone can help to provide a lasting solution to the problems of that region.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The conflict between Israel and Palestine has escalated, and the situation there has deteriorated to an extremely dangerous degree. The Chinese Government has

expressed its deep concern and preoccupation in this regard. We condemn the suicidal acts against Israeli civilians; such acts of violence by a few individuals run counter to the aspirations of the Palestinian people for peace and to the efforts of the international community to promote peace in that region. Yet still more alarming are the massive military offensives by Israel against Palestinians, in which the compound of Chairman Arafat was attacked, his guards wounded and innocent Palestinian civilians killed. As some commentaries have pointed out, such actions are no different from a declaration of war against Palestine, which will bring very serious consequences.

The Secretary-General, Mr. Annan, also pointed out, very wisely, that destroying the Palestinian Authority will not bring peace; it will bring the region even closer to war. We oppose and condemn the barbaric aggression of Israel against Palestine and call on Israel to immediately stop its military actions and withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories. Events have demonstrated time and again that countering violence with violence does not help but, rather, that it will lead to an escalation of tensions and fuel hatred between the two sides.

The Arab League summit, which has just concluded, adopted an Arab peace plan, inspired by the Saudi peace proposal for the Middle East, which has facilitated and contributed to the efforts aimed at peace in the region. The Chinese leader and the Chinese Government have expressed their appreciation and congratulations in that regard.

In his statement today, the Secretary-General said that the summit has created a new opening for peace. The international community — including, of course, Israel and Palestine — should take advantage of this new opportunity for peace in the Middle East and take practical steps to cooperate with all the peace initiatives. Given the present circumstances, the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, should play a more active and effective role so as to prevent the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from escalating into a full-fledged confrontation. Peace must be restored to the region. Only through peace can Israel and Palestine live side by side. To this end, it is imperative to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and the principle of land for peace.

We strongly appeal to Israel and Palestine to exercise the utmost restraint, immediately stop all acts of violence, return to the negotiating table and work with the international community to advance the momentum for peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Cameroon would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on having convened this meeting of the Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, at the request of the League of Arab States. We welcome the Secretary-General here today and once again commend his tireless efforts for peace in general and in the Middle East in particular. We thank him for his important statement, which was well-balanced and made points that were commensurate with what is at stake: peace, which has been greatly threatened in the Middle East. Cameroon shares his views.

On 12 March 2002, the Security Council, at the initiative of the United States, adopted resolution 1397 (2002). That was a historic resolution because of the fundamental provisions that it contained. It set out a vision of a region in which two States, Palestine and Israel, live side by side within secure and recognized, borders, with the immediate cessation of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction, and the implementation of the Tenet plan and the Mitchell report recommendations with the aim of resuming negotiations on a political settlement.

Cameroon fully supported that resolution, because its provisions were in keeping with what we have always believed. We pinned great hope on it, and we still do. The situation prevailing now on the ground, which has justified the convening of this meeting, could, unfortunafely, divert us from the spirit in which we had committed ourselves. This situation concerns and greatly saddens us, particularly because it has come about at a time when at the Beirut summit the League of Arab States was sending a strong signal to the peace process through the adoption of the plan proposed by Saudi Arabia.

Now all of our hopes have been dashed by the new cycle of violence and reprisal in the region. It is clear to Cameroon that terrorism cannot be accepted on any pretext. We wish to reaffirm here our condemnation of acts of terrorism, particularly those against innocent civilians. We must encourage both

sides to resume the path of negotiation towards a lasting peace.

In order to negotiate, there must be two; they must acknowledge, accept and respect each other. That is a necessary precondition, which prompts me to ask the following question. Are the measures of laying siege, the attacks and the actions that hamper the normal activities of the Palestinian Authority truly in keeping with the new momentum that we wish to see in the search for peace in the Middle East?

We must recall that peace in the Middle East means the creation of the Palestinian State and the recognition of Israel, its right to existence within secure, recognized borders. As Cameroon has always stressed, this means that all parties must strictly implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). These put forward the immediate and strict application of the fundamental principle of land for peace.

These are the elements and conditions for a just and lasting peace.

That is why, in addition to the deterioration of the situation and because of it, the Security Council must, more than ever before, end its deafening silence and reaffirm forcefully, today, resolution 1397 (2002) and call for its implementation without delay. That is what the peoples of the United Nations who live in the Middle East expect of the Council.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I regret the fact that I must take the floor today, on Good Friday. In Arabic, Good Friday is called "Sad Friday", and it is a sad day for more than one reason: many Palestinians have been killed. The President of the Palestinian Authority has been attacked in his very headquarters; the compound has been destroyed.

The Security Council's immediate response to the request of the of the Arab Group — the convening of an emergency Council meeting to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question — bears witness to a concern over and a readiness to confront the acts of killing and destruction perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian people. We hope that this meeting will give the Council a further opportunity to examine the wounds of the Palestinian people, because that people continues to spill its blood, as it has for more than 50 years. This problem did not crop up yesterday or today. The current suffering is the result of Israeli occupation and reflects only part of the general abuse perpetrated on the Palestinians by the State of Israel and its denial of their rights. We are not meeting to discuss the first act of aggression — it is another link in a long chain of terrorist practices carried out by Israel against the Palestinian people.

If the Council wishes to condemn terrorism, it must also condemn Israeli terrorism. That terrorism is the occupation of Palestinian land and repression of the Palestinians. Any debate in the Council on developments in the area that fails to examine the causes of the Middle East conflict — and I am referring to the Israeli policy of occupation, repression and assassination — would only encourage Mr. Sharon's terrorism. He would only see another opportunity to gain time and attack the Palestinian people in order to stifle its aspirations for freedom and independence, which are the same as those of any other occupied people before their liberation.

Those who refer to Sharon's willingness to find peace are speaking of a mirage or illusion. He has never tried to conceal his true intentions and policies, which are as clear as the nose on his face. Sharon has no intention of withdrawing from the occupied territory. He intends to continue colonizing the area, constructing settlements, confiscating Palestinian land and chasing the Palestinian people away from its land. As long as Sharon is able to do these things, he will persevere.

Sharon is the person who ordered the massacres in Sabra and Shatila and then led a provocative visit to Al-Haram al-Sharif. In addition, it was Sharon who, unable to kill the leadership of the Palestinians, yesterday ordered the attack on the Palestinian Authority and on the very person who had led the peace negotiations. Sharon has called for either Arafat's arrest or his death. In an interview yesterday, Arafat declared that if Sharon wanted to kill him, he was ready to be a martyr. Therefore, now Arafat himself is backed into a corner — and even he will be a martyr.

Today Sharon is conducting a policy of destruction and assassination — a policy of destroying Palestinian cities, villages and refugee camps. This is what we see on television and read about it in the press. To date, Sharon has killed 1,300 innocent Palestinians.

This constitutes genocide against the Palestinian people.

Yesterday, Sharon declared that Arafat was an enemy. What does "enemy" mean under international law? It means a person whom one can kill. These acts require the Council to condemn them, just as it has condemned the acts of other war criminals in other countries. The acts that Sharon has committed send a very unambiguous message and are a clear denial of the historic, enlightened resolutions adopted by Arab leaders at the Arab Summit in Beirut. Those resolutions are hardly one day old.

I believe there is a direct link between what has happened today, on Good Friday — this "Sad Friday" — and the resolutions that the Arab Summit adopted and presented to the world that they might serve to achieve lasting, comprehensive peace on the basis of international legality and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Those resolutions elicited great international support — and this is Israel's response to the Arab initiative.

Now we must try to learn from and understand the true meaning and implications of these massacres of the Palestinian people. That people is being attacked by the Israeli army with the most sophisticated tanks available and by the Israeli air force and artillery; that army has not hesitated to destroy anything — old men, women, children, houses, farmland — in order to obliterate any trace of life.

Israeli terrorism against the Palestinian people is the most comprehensive form of terrorism we know. Arabs on the whole condemn terrorism. This unprecedented level of terrorism is the bloodiest type there is, and we deem it as our main task to ask the Council immediately to appeal for an end to these acts of Israeli barbarism if we truly want peace in the area.

The presence of tanks and cannons in Palestinian towns and villages is totally unjustifiable. It is therefore incumbent upon the Council to order Israel immediately and unconditionally to withdraw from these towns and villages.

The only guarantee of peace in the Middle East is the securing of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. Anyone who deems sound and rational the Israeli logic of achieving peace before security is wrong, because peace does not bring security; the contrary is true. When peace prevails, everyone feels secure, but occupation cannot give rise to peace.

The Syrian delegation reiterates the need for the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility under the Charter and to seize this opportunity to act, on the basis of the historic decisions and resolutions adopted by the Arab Summit, in order to preserve what remains of its prestige in the eyes of the world and of the Arab people in particular.

The very least that the Council can do is adopt a direct condemnation of Israeli policy and of its repressive measures, and call on Israel immediately to put an end to this policy, so that the international call for ending the occupation can be heeded and the established rights of the Palestinian people can be recognized.

Resolutions that do not make a clear distinction between the aggressor and the victim and that tolerate and justify the actions of the aggressor can lead only to greater devastation and suffering. This is the message we must all understand deeply. We must remind Israel that it must respect international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, in view of the attacks that have been perpetrated since yesterday. Indeed, victims are dying in the streets today. Ambulances are not allowed to help them or take them to hospitals.

In conclusion, the Council must demonstrate a genuine and sincere will to discharge its role and responsibility, in particular as regards Israel's occupation of Palestinian land, and compel Israel to withdraw from Palestinian and Syrian land, as well as from what remains of Lebanese territory since 4 June 1967.

We must not cooperate with Israeli policies that are hostile and destructive to peace.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Norway.

The peace process in the Middle East is facing its most serious crisis ever. Norway is extremely concerned about the dramatic escalation of violence in recent weeks and days. Present developments are threatening all of the achievements made since the Declaration of Principles was signed in 1993.

Norway strongly condemns the Palestinian terrorist attacks. There is no excuse for the killing of

innocent civilians. No society can live with suicide attacks and violence at the level we see at present. The Palestinian Authority must fight terrorism vigorously and dismantle the terrorist networks. Nothing less than a 100 per cent effort is acceptable.

The Israeli bombardment of Palestinian cities and institutions, which has led to death and destruction, is unacceptable. Norway strongly objects to the ongoing military operation against President Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah and urges Israel to put an immediate end to it. Norway fails to see how these attacks can contribute to greater security.

It is Norway's conviction that both parties must now adopt forceful and immediate measures to stop the escalating violence. These steps include the following.

The Palestinian Authority must do its utmost to halt Palestinian terrorist attacks. Continued terrorist attacks cannot be tolerated.

Ongoing military operations against President Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah must be halted.

Israel must stop its attacks on Palestinian infrastructure, stop incursions into area A and withdraw its armed forces.

A serious political dialogue must be resumed immediately with the aim of ending the Middle East conflict and establishing a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel within secure and recognized borders, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002), as well as the Oslo Accords.

The Tenet plan and the Mitchell recommendations must be implemented immediately and unconditionally.

Humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestinians must be increased to counter the increasingly difficult economic and social situation.

The international community, and indeed the Council, must stand united in its demand that these measures be implemented.

The Israeli and Palestinian leaders seem today locked in a battle with no exit strategies. This is untenable. The final responsibility for ending the hostilities remains with the parties themselves. At the same time, the Security Council must assist the parties in reaching this goal, building on the recent adoption of Security Council resolution 1397 (2002). Norway stands ready to make its contribution in this regard.

The aim of the Oslo process was to end the occupation and to create security for Israel. We can still achieve this goal, but only if a political process is started now. In this regard, Norway welcomes Crown Prince Abdullah's peace initiative.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Algeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Let me start by saying how pleased we are, Sir, to see you presiding over the Security Council, and to convey to you the satisfaction I am sure I share with all other Member States at the uniformly praiseworthy manner in which you have conducted the work of the Council this month.

Our gratitude goes also to the representative of Mexico, who presided over the Council last month with great talent and effectiveness.

The very day after the Beirut summit, at which Arab leaders offered Israel recognition and security in exchange for its withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied in 1967 and the establishment of a Palestinian State with its capital at Al-Quds — a bold and important gesture in every respect, which was rightly hailed by the whole international community because it could restore just and lasting peace to that tormented part of the world — Israel responded in the only language it knows and that it speaks in total scorn for international opinion: that of blind, brutal, disproportionate and unbridled violence.

As the Security Council is holding an emergency meeting at the request of Arab and Islamic States, dozens of tanks and thousands of Israeli soldiers are trooping through Ramallah — which is now besieged, cordoned off, cut off from the world and occupied — bringing death and destruction. The very headquarters of the Palestinian Authority, until now safe from the destructive madness of the Israeli forces, is now in ruins: tanks have penetrated to the very heart of Chairman Arafat's residence; Israeli forces have killed several of his aides and wounding dozens of others, and have arrested an unknown number of people.

The life of Chairman Arafat — the uncontested leader of the Palestinian people, the democratically elected President of the Palestinian Authority and the interlocutor who is essential to any negotiation — is now under grave threat; his freedom of movement has been reduced to the bare minimum. But his prestige and his moral authority among his people, who are rallying around him in this moment of adversity, are great than ever. Even as his offices are in flames, his infrastructure destroyed, his police force crushed, his communications cut, he is being required to curb the rage of a people living daily under occupation, repression and humiliation, and to control the legitimate uprising that is constantly fuelled by the unheard-of violence and the ever increasing repression.

The fact is that this new Israeli aggression is aimed at smashing the peace process set in motion at the Beirut summit on the false pretext of responding to acts caused by the acute frustration of a people that has lived under occupation for generations, at damaging the credibility of the Palestinian Authority, at breaking down its machinery and at making it unable to meet its obligations while continually demanding that it take drastic action against isolated acts of violence that nothing can either prevent or control with the few resources the Authority possesses and given the chaos, confusion and terror that prevail in the Palestinian territories.

Israel's scorched-earth policy aims ultimately at discrediting and disqualifying the very concept of a viable and responsible Palestinian State — which is the final goal of the peace process and which has been recognized and enshrined by the Security Council. The result of this negative policy is that today the Middle East is closer than ever to the brink of widespread confrontation. In view of this situation it is imperative for the international community to stop being a passive observer of the Middle East, which is awash in violence, and to shoulder its responsibility with courage and determination before the region lapses into total war with tragic consequences for all.

Here, the Security Council, given its special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, must become directly involved by calling for an immediate cessation of the present Israeli aggression; by calling for the withdrawal of Israeli security forces from Ramallah and all other occupied Palestinian areas; by demanding the immediate lifting of the restrictions imposed on Chairman Arafat; by taking a decision on ways to provide the Palestinian people with the protection it is entitled to expect of the international community, including by deploying international observers; by urging Israel to respect the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949; and by calling for the complete implementation, as a matter of urgency, of the recommendations of the Mitchell report and the Tenet plan.

More than ever, Algeria is convinced that peace is a strategic choice and that there is no alternative to returning to the negotiating table; we remain strongly committed to a peaceful, just, lasting and comprehensive settlement, as formally proposed at the Arab summit just held at Beirut: a settlement based on international law as embodied in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on Israel's respect for its commitments under the peace process, in particular the principle of land for peace, agreed upon at Madrid, which would make possible the establishment of a Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Barg (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are very pleased, Sir, to see you presiding over this important emergency meeting of the Security Council. We hope it will meet expectations and will be commensurate with the gravity of the events that have required its convening. My congratulations go to the friendly delegation of Mexico on the skill with which it guided the work of the Council last month.

The world is deeply concerned at the developments in Palestine since dawn today, especially at those in Ramallah, which has been completely taken over by Israeli forces, including the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority.

The Arab summit had just reaffirmed that peace is the strategic option chosen by the Arab people, and this is how Israel responded: with a terrorist Zionist tank and bulldozer attack against towns and villages and against the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority. This is not only an attack on the Palestinian people and on Mr. Arafat himself; it is also an attack on the successes and achievements of the Beirut Arab summit.

All that remains is the Israeli strategic option, which is war. This reflects the racist Zionist nature of that entity, which is built on destruction and deportation.

Today's direct attacks against President Arafat, the deployment of tanks at his headquarters and the large number of dead and injured among his aides and his guards prove that Mr. Sharon's policy continues to be based on aggression and that Mr. Sharon is ignoring all the appeals addressed to him by every country in the world. It is a policy that turns its back on international law. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya strongly condemns this criminal Zionist attack, which will lead to further bloodletting and to the killing of more innocents.

This is a patent example of State terrorism practised by the Zionist entity against the defenceless Palestinian people. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya reaffirms that the Security Council, the international community and the peoples of the world must strongly condemn this danger now threatening our entire region. Responsibility for this criminal behaviour lies with the Zionist entity, as well as with the Powers that enable it to practise its policy of death and destruction. There is blatant contempt for all humanitarian norms in these barbarous acts, and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya calls upon the Security Council to act in accordance with its responsibilities by declaring that the Palestinian question is a case of occupation first and foremost and that that occupation must end. Any other kind of decision is bound to fail, just as all the other agreements and understandings have failed, from Oslo to Camp David.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country, Egypt, feels a great deal of anger today over the arbitrary behaviour of the Israeli Government. That behaviour, if it reflects anything of any meaning, reflects the inability to perceive reality and that that Government's continuation of practices that have been rejected by the international community can only lead to further confrontation and violence and further loss of innocent lives on both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides. Today's military operations by the Israeli army against the Palestinian territories, and its occupation of the headquarters of the Palestinian President in Ramallah — which is the temporary Palestinian capital until its move to East Jerusalem — are acts that reflect the narrow vision of the Israeli leadership and its inability to understand a situation that its own actions and behaviour have created.

The real problem which Israel is trying to avoid dealing with is that the situation it now faces with the Palestinian people and its legitimate leadership is one in which a people is rejecting the continued occupation of its territory, cities and villages by armed force, and the Israeli Government perception that it can break the back of the national popular resistance of a heroic people against armed occupation through the blind use of brute armed force. That occupation by Israel and its settlers has been taking place since 5 June 1967. Israel's attacks and its blind use of armed force to terrorize and humiliate the Palestinian people and its leadership will be defeated by that heroic resistance and the steadfast, firm stand of the Palestinian people against foreign occupation.

The problem is one of occupation, and only occupation. That occupation is the cause of all the suffering of the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples. As I have previously made clear, Egypt condemns all acts of violence that lead to loss of life and civilian victims in Israeli cities. But we also condemn most firmly all these reckless operations, the blind use of force and the arrogance of using force against the Palestinian people and its legitimate leadership.

Egypt demands that the Security Council assume its responsibility under the Charter and that it send a clear message and vision that includes the following elements.

First, the Council should call on Israel to refrain from any attacks on the legitimate Palestinian leadership represented by President Arafat and his aides and assistants in any way. Secondly, the Council should demand that Israel immediately withdraw from all cities and territories it has entered and end all its recent measures.

Thirdly, the Council should call upon both parties to commit themselves to urgent implementation of the Tenet plan and the Mitchell recommendations, and to respond to all the efforts made by the parties concerned — foremost among which are those of the Secretary-General, the European Union, the Russian Federation, the United States and others — with a view to bringing acts of violence under control, ending armed confrontations and moving towards a negotiating process that will lead to a settlement. In

this regard, we cannot allow for a repetition of what has taken place before, namely, wasting time and manoeuvring in the same way as during the 10 years since the Madrid Conference.

Only yesterday the Arab nation presented an integrated and comprehensive vision of a just and final settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict that included the Palestinian question, which is the essence and cause of that conflict. Regrettably, Israel's answer was that of an arrogant Power. I would like to reiterate once again my country's conviction that the current armed action will not achieve for Israel and its people the security they seek. This attack will only complicate matters further and open the way for more reciprocal violence and loss of security for both parties.

The objective all parties must work to achieve must be to end Israeli occupation and to establish a Palestinian State with its capital in East Jerusalem, with equal security for both sides. Finally, there must be good-neighbourly relations between the two countries within secure and recognized borders. This is exactly what resolution 1397 (2002) called for, and we support all of its elements.

In spite of this, we reaffirm that as long as occupation remains, as long as there is a desire to continue the settlement activity and to rely on the policies of force and violence, this sad situation will continue to represent a sword of Damocles hanging over the region. This will continue until Israel reaches the same outcome as that recognized by all occupation forces throughout history: domination and occupation will not achieve security for the occupier, for its citizens or for the sons of the defenceless Palestinian people.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Qatar. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, at the outset, on behalf of the delegation of Qatar, the Chairman of the Ninth Islamic Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), allow me to extend our sincere thanks for your prompt response to my Government's response to hold this important meeting in order to consider the tragic and serious developments in the Palestinian territories.

The Security Council is meeting today at one of the most critical stages of the Middle East peace process. Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian people, the targeting of the Chairman of its National Authority, violation of the sanctity of his headquarters, its bombardment, destruction and occupation, and violation of the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem are all blatant violations of all international norms and instruments that could lead to serious repercussions for international peace and security. In this regard, Mr. President, I would like to hold your Council fully responsible for the present situation in the region.

Since that ominous visit by Mr. Sharon to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, we have sought by all peaceful means through the Council to put an end to these violations in order to preserve security in the region. We have warned of the repercussions of such actions. This was actually reaffirmed by the Ministerial Committee of the Ninth Islamic Summit at the Security Council on 27 November 2000.

When double standards are applied in Israel's case, it is tantamount to giving that Government the green light to do what it wishes. We are not questioning intentions, but the Council's unity should not be upheld at the expense of the blood of the Palestinian people and its Chairman, Mr. Arafat.

The Israeli Government is wrong if it believes that State terror practised against the Palestinian people will ensure its security. That kind of logic runs counter to the willingness to establish security and a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, as expressed by all Arab countries in the final document of the Arab Summit issued in Beirut two days ago in response to the initiative by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Abdullah ibn Abdul-Aziz Al Saud. This initiative received a positive response and was supported by different countries around the world. It was also considered by the Secretary-General in his statement before this Council as a historic step towards reaching a peaceful settlement to the conflict in the Middle East.

This is how Israel responds to the good intentions of the Arab Summit. This vicious attack runs counter to international legitimacy — the legitimacy that was asserted by this Council in resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). This legitimacy should bring security to Israel — security that the generals in the Israeli Government have failed to achieve for over 50 years. In this regard, we would like to address the wise amongst the Israeli people to use reason and good logic

in order to save the region from more bloodshed on both sides. Violence can only generate counter-violence.

The Security Council is called on to adopt effective resolutions that will preserve international security, since the region where we live is extremely important to all States. This fact is known to all. Any breach of security in the region would consequently affect the security of the whole world. Therefore, on behalf of the delegation of Qatar, Chairman of the Ninth Islamic Conference of the OIC, I would like to appeal to the Security Council to take the necessary measures to secure the following: first, the immediate withdrawal by all Israeli forces from the territories under the Palestinian Authority; secondly, the unconditional return to the negotiating table and immediate implementation of all agreements reached before, with a view to putting an end to Israeli occupation of all occupied Arab territories; and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Djibouti. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti): Mr. President, I thank you for calling this emergency Council meeting. I also welcome the timely and pertinent statement made by the Secretary-General. We find it forthright and visionary. We applaud his courage and his relentless efforts to achieve peace and stability in that troubled region.

Before the historic Arab League conference concluded its business, Israeli tanks were already at the gate of President Arafat's compound. Ironically, at the same time, Mr. Arafat was declaring an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. He was under intense pressure to make that declaration, and he did it. But what did he get in return? We all know by now what has transpired since then, and there is not the scantiest cause for optimism as things stand now.

No one condones violence, and we have consistently condemned attacks against civilian populations, be they Israeli or Palestinian. What is unacceptable, however, is to place squarely on the shoulders of Mr. Arafat the blame for all the actions of Palestinians, who are revolting against unbridled aggression, gross injustice and relentless brutality accumulated over the last three and a half decades of occupation.

The Palestinians are at a military disadvantage, and whatever they have achieved in the last decade by way of security infrastructure has been deliberately targeted and destroyed by Israeli air power and tanks. Yet this humiliated, embattled and disenfranchised leader, under complete siege, is required to deliver peace and to control his angry and frustrated people in order to abide by the dictates of Israel, the occupying Power. Where are the carrots? Thirty-seven years have elapsed since the occupation began, and the Palestinians are asked to continue being patient and not to lift a finger. Otherwise, they will be dealt with vigorously and mercilessly. That is the unfortunate dilemma that the Palestinians find themselves in today.

Mr. Sharon's Government has embarked upon what it calls "widespread actions" against Palestinians throughout their territory. This is a declaration of war unleashed against the people under occupation who lost all hope a long time ago in the absence of any credible strategy or sense of direction for peace. By negating the Oslo Peace Accords, which provided the only meaningful hope for necessary compromises towards peace in the Middle East, Mr. Sharon seems determined to bury the Palestinian aspirations for good and on his own terms.

One wonders about the meaning of the words emanating from Israel to the effect that it has decided on the absolute isolation of Yasser Arafat and intends not to physically harm him. What we see, read and hear is the complete opposite of these words: the battle raging this very moment in Mr. Arafat's own compound, the Palestinian symbol of nationhood, as well as the demolition and occupation of buildings in it, with an unknown number of casualties and prisoners taken, and the confinement of Mr. Arafat to almost a corner of the complex. This is indeed alarming. It is unjustified, illegal and in complete violation of all civilized norms and behaviour. After all, the Authority's facilities and infrastructure, particularly its seat of power, are supposed to be inviolable and out of bounds to any infringement or incursion.

We call on Israel to respect international norms, to desist from harming Mr. Arafat, to desist from any further aggression and to withdraw immediately from the Authority's headquarters.

This Council is called upon to move swiftly in order to bring about a ceasefire between these two peoples, in conformity with the solemn duty entrusted to it by the Charter of maintaining international peace and security. To do nothing in the current insane situation is to abdicate its primary responsibility under the Charter.

Israel has decided to replace the offer of peace, recognition, security and normal relations with arrogance, rejection, force and futility. We call on Israel to heed the merits of the Mitchell report and the Tenet plan, the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General and the sense of this Council. It is inconceivable that the international community will just stand by idly as this theatre of the absurd continues to unfold before our very eyes.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Spain. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria and Romania — and the associated country Turkey align themselves with this statement.

The European Union is extremely concerned at the grave crisis in the Middle East. In the Declaration of Barcelona of 16 March, the European Union reiterated its appeal to both parties to take effective and immediate action to halt the bloodshed. There is no military solution to this conflict. We said so in Barcelona and we will repeat it now. Peace and security can be achieved only through negotiation. To find a solution to the current situation, it is essential to address the security, political and economic aspects as inseparable and interdependent elements of a single process.

In light of the events which are taking place in the Palestinian territories, the European Union today issued a declaration condemning in the most categorical terms the terrorist attack perpetrated this morning in Jerusalem, reiterating its demand to the Palestinian Authority and to its President, Mr. Arafat, that they adopt all possible measures to stop the spiral of violence and to prevent the initiators and perpetrators of the terrorist attacks from going unpunished.

The European Union has also categorically condemned the brutal terrorist attack in Netanya last Wednesday. However, the legitimate fight of Israel against terrorism and the reaction to the brutal attacks must be compatible with an effective operating capacity of the Palestinian Authority and its President, the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people.

Therefore, the European Union urges an end to the attack against the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah and calls for the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli Defence Forces from that city.

The European Union reiterates the need for an immediate application of a ceasefire that takes into account only the conditions already envisaged in the Tenet Plan and those expressed by the United States Special Envoy, Mr. Zinni, which should be the basis of an agreement without delay between the parties.

The resolution of the Arab League in Beirut is a solid basis for progress towards a political perspective for a fair and comprehensive peace in the region and the establishment of normal relations between Israel and the Arab world, safeguarding the security of all countries involved and offering them a future of stability and prosperity. A sound political perspective needs to be restored, and political and security measures must be implemented in parallel and in a mutually reinforcing way. In this regard, the European Union warmly welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), which reflects the commitment of the international community. That resolution must be urgently implemented, in particular its demand for an immediate cessation of violence, including acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction; and its call for the Israeli and Palestinian sides and their leaders to cooperate in the implementation of the Tenet work plan and the Mitchell report recommendations with the aim of resuming negotiations on a political settlement.

The indiscriminate terrorist attacks today and over the past days and weeks that have killed innocent civilians must be condemned. As the legitimate authority, the Palestinian Authority bears the responsibility for fighting terrorism with all legitimate means at its disposal. It must do everything possible to put an end to terrorism, dismantle all terrorist networks, including Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, and arrest and prosecute the perpetrators of terrorist acts. Its capacity to do so must not be weakened.

Israel, notwithstanding its right to fight terrorism, must immediately withdraw its military forces from areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority, stop extra judicial executions, lift the closures and restrictions, freeze settlements and respect international law. Both parties must respect international humanitarian standards. The use of excessive force cannot be justified. The actions against medical and humanitarian institutions and personnel are absolutely unacceptable. They must be able to fully perform their functions.

Resolution 1397 (2002) also affirms the vision of a region in which two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders. The European Union fully shares this vision and its two-fold objective: the creation of a democratic, viable and independent State of Palestine, bringing to an end the occupation of 1967, and the right of Israel to live within safe and secure boundaries, guaranteed by the commitment of the international community, and in particular the Arab countries.

The European Union is determined to play its role, together with the parties, the countries in the region, the United States, the United Nations and Russia in the pursuit of a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the conflict. A solution based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and on the principles of the Madrid Conference, Oslo and subsequent agreements.

We remain particularly convinced that a third-party monitoring mechanism would help both parties to pursue their efforts to that end and we urge them to consider proposals to accept observers. The European Union and its member States are prepared to participate in such a mechanism.

The European Union recognizes and praises those who continue to work tirelessly for peace within the peace camps of Israeli and Palestinian society and supports the direct contacts and dialogue that both parties are conducting.

Following on its present effort, the European Union will make a substantial contribution to peace-building in the region with the aim of improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people, consolidating and supporting the Palestinian Authority, strengthening the economic basis of the future State of Palestine and promoting development and regional economic integration. In this perspective, the European Union stands ready to contribute to the reconstruction of the Palestinian economy as an integral part of regional development.

In conclusion, the European Union remains convinced that, in order to be durable, peace in the Middle East must be comprehensive.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Jordan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Arab Group, I wish to thank you, Sir, for your concern and prompt response in holding this emergency meeting to consider the critical situation in the Middle East. We also welcome the Secretary-General.

As members know, the Arab Summit in Beirut recently adopted a new Arab initiative based on specific proposals made by His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This historic initiative reflects the readiness of the League of Arab States and all its members to recognize the State of Israel and to establish normal relations with it in return for its complete withdrawal from occupied Arab territories; the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital; and recognition of the rights of all Palestinian civilians under international law. We fully believe in the great importance of this decision, which represents a unique and historic opportunity to solve the Palestinian problem and end the Arab-Israeli conflict in a just and comprehensive manner.

However, Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and its leadership continues, especially in Ramallah. In this regard, we strongly condemn the recent Israeli actions against Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and consider them to be a serious threat to the security of the entire region that could lead to a total deterioration in the situation and loss of life. It is clear that this and other aggressions — such as the policy of assassination, the destruction of national institutions, homes and the infrastructure, collective detention, the security and economic blockade of Palestinian towns and villages and the killing of countless innocent Palestinian civilians — will not give Israel security. Furthermore, they represent a flagrant violation of the agreements signed between the two parties and of the norms of international humanitarian law and other international

norms and instruments. We condemn these unacceptable and unjustified acts. We also condemn the targeting and killing of civilians on both sides.

We urge the Security Council to assume its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations by calling on Israel immediately and totally to withdraw from all the territories it has reoccupied and to uphold its commitments under the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War.

We also call upon the Security Council to demand that Israel implement Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), with a view to putting an end to the Israeli occupation of all the occupied Arab territories and allowing the Palestinian people to establish their own State on all their national territory with Jerusalem as its capital.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Iraq. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Kadhe (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, on behalf of the delegation of Iraq, for having convened this emergency meeting of the Security Council. This meeting is being held under very difficult international circumstances resulting from the Zionist aggression against the Palestinian people and its historic leadership.

Once again, the Zionist entity is showing its true face. It is showing that it is a racist, terrorist and intrinsically Nazi entity. It is an entity which, because of its actions and behaviour, embodies the very concept of State terrorism. It continues to perpetuate acts that flout the most basic rules of international law and human rights, and carries out criminal acts of aggression against civilians living in the occupied Palestinian territories, shamelessly using missiles, tanks and aircraft against the heroic Palestinian people, who are fighting with their bare hands and whose hearts are the only shields they have to defend their honour and the integrity of their land.

The policy pursued by the Zionist entity seeks to demoralize the Palestinian people and destroy the very symbol of the Palestinian revolution, President Yasser Arafat. It is a policy that seeks to fulfil its territorial expansionist ambitions at the expense of the Palestinian people.

The Security Council is being severely tested again. Will it discharge its mandate? Will it be able to maintain international peace and security? Will the Council be able to carry out its mission as the representative of the States of the world in seeking to attain that goal?

Unfortunately, we have lost hope, because we know that the Council is dominated by the State that sponsors the Zionist entity — the State that continues to use its privileges in the Security Council to obstruct the adoption of resolutions by the Council or, at the very least, to urge the adoption of a resolutions that are weak and unjust and hardly act as a deterrent for the Zionist entity.

That entity continues to flout Security Council resolutions — and that is why the weakness of the Council vis-à-vis that entity is the decisive factor that has enabled it to continue its acts of aggression and to continue to violate international law and the Charter and to commit crimes against humanity. Such acts are war crimes, committed by the Zionist entity against the Palestinian people.

Will the international community be able to put an end to the disregard shown by this entity? Will it be able to prevent it from continuing to commit such ugly, inhuman crimes? We appeal to the Security Council, to the international community and to all freedom-loving people throughout the world to condemn those acts strongly and to use every measure available in order to force that entity to act in accordance with international *jus cogens* to ensure that it is forced to withdraw immediately from the occupied Palestinian towns and territories.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Cuba, India and Saudi Arabia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba), Mr. Gopinathan (India) and

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this timely meeting on an important issue which is the focus of attention of the entire international community. I would also like to thank Mr. Kofi Annan for the sincere efforts that he has made over the past few months to address the situation.

This morning, the Israeli occupying army started another round of large-scale military operations involving ground troops, apache helicopters, tanks, armoured vehicles and so forth against Palestinian civilian areas and Mr. Arafat's headquarters, and caused both many human casualties and large-scale material damage. Earlier this month, the Israeli army staged another round of large-scale operations, which lasted several days and resulted in the death of more than 200 innocent civilians.

Such military operations are a form of collective punishment inflicted on civilians. They increase civilian casualties and make life even more difficult and precarious for the Palestinians, who were already subjected to bombing of civilian areas, assassinations, demolitions and daily humiliation, as well as severe physical and economic hardships.

Against this backdrop, and as the international community is condemning the latest massive invasion of Palestinian areas, it is disturbing that today some still align themselves with the aggressive, oppressing and occupying side.

The Israeli spokespersons' rejection of the latest peace initiative put forward by the Arab States once again clearly proves that peace is not on Israel's agenda. There should be no doubt that, by embarking on a large-scale invasion of civilian areas just a day after the Arab Summit, the Israelis clearly meant to signal their opposition to any serious effort towards peace. Yet we did not need to listen to their spokespersons to know about their inherent opposition to any peaceful solution. Their continued settlement activity since 1993 — including the building of 34 new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza over the last year alone, among other things — has spoken for itself. The ongoing uprising is clearly the result of Palestinian disappointment in the peace talks, which bore no fruit simply because, from the beginning, the Israelis never meant to cede anything to the Palestinians.

There is no escaping the fact that occupation lies at the origin of all the trouble and instability in the region, and the Israeli regime simply cannot continue to occupy Arab lands, be they Palestinian, Syrian or Lebanese, on the one hand, and hope to ensure security by resorting to repression and aggression on the other. So long as the illness that causes pain is not effectively and duly addressed, the pain persists.

After so much destruction and the loss of so many precious lives, the urgent question that the international community should tackle now is whether or not the Palestinians are entitled to the right of self-defence. Moreover, while the Security Council has thus far failed, for obvious reasons, to take any action to protect the defenceless Palestinians against Israeli State terrorism and the armed-to-the-teeth Israeli army, the question is also how and by what means they should defend themselves.

International public opinion is outraged at the atrocious ongoing military operations by Israeli troops against the Palestinians. Moreover, Israel's acts have already taken the Middle East region to the brink of all-out war and disaster, and there is a real fear that the flames of war will spread to the whole region. Therefore, there should be no doubt that the international community earnestly expects the Security Council seriously to live up to its Charter responsibility, effectively address the root causes of the conflict and deal appropriately with the crimes perpetrated by the Israeli regime.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Pakistan, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): We meet today in pain and grief over what is happening in Palestine. Only three weeks ago, the Security Council acted with courage and wisdom, reaffirming the vision of a lasting peace in the Middle East. That vision, unfortunately, has been blurred by the events of the past 24 hours, demonstrating how fragile and precarious the situation in that region has become.

Only yesterday, the Arab countries together gave the entire world a clarion call for peace in the Middle East with justice and dignity, and the best opportunity ever to move back from the brink of violence and destruction and find a way out of this tragic quagmire. The Beirut Declaration of the Arab League was a message of hope, sincerity and reconciliation. Today we are witnessing the response, in the form of intransigence and belligerence. The vestiges of hope for peace are being demolished underneath tank tracks.

Ramallah's smog has peace under siege. We are all seeing this on television screens. The headlines say, "Arafat Cornered". The fact is, it is peace and the international community that have been cornered. The headquarters of a people's elected leader are being systematically taken apart with violence and bloodshed. Is this the response the Beirut Declaration merits? The spirit of commitment and sincerity shown at Beirut has now been rebuffed amid the chaos of heavy gunfire.

The Palestinian issue is not confined to Ramallah. The recent incidents in the region are alarming and the loss of innocent lives shocking, but they are linked to a sense of injustice and desperation. After all, we must ask ourselves: why would high school girls, who have a bright future ahead of them, opt for these acts of desperation and sacrifice their lives? Why are the Palestinians, one after another, becoming suicidal? Why are we not trying to listen to their cries of anger and anguish? For what reason are other innocent people also losing their lives?

The loss of innocent life on one side or the other is the loss of humanity. Are we so caught up in the horror of these acts of desperation that we do not think of their underlying causes? Are we so blind that we do not see obvious reasons for what is happening? Not only is this a matter worthy of serious reflection; it calls for some soul-searching by all and for urgent action. The Council must act today, if not for its own credibility, at least for preventing the current crisis from erupting into a full-scale conflict or war.

Three weeks ago, the Secretary-General had appropriately surmised that — and these are his words — "we are nearing the edge of an abyss". Today, we are indeed at the edge of that abyss. If something is not done urgently to reverse the situation, the consequences will be unimaginable.

It is unfortunate that the present deterioration of the situation should have come about in the very month during which bold new initiatives were being launched and hopes for peace revived. Yesterday's Beirut declaration came only two weeks after historic Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), which affirmed the vision of a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel within secure and recognized borders. The resolution demanded an immediate cessation of all acts of violence in the region and the resumption of the peace process.

Resolution 1397 (2002) also welcomed the recent peace initiatives, including that of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah. This is in addition to the efforts that the Secretary-General himself has been making to induce the parties, and, indeed, the international community, to move towards the path of peace. He has been acting as the conscience of this world body, if not that of the world itself. It is regrettable that such bold and imaginative initiatives for peace are being thwarted by the roar of tanks.

Over the last two years, there has been a pressing need for the resumption of negotiations. This need could not be more urgent now, especially in the light of the spiralling and escalating violence that has claimed hundreds of innocent lives. With the peace process derailed and violence spiralling out of control, never in the history of the Palestine crisis has the situation been so alarming and the need to respond more critical.

We have debated the issue of Palestine in this Chamber for well over half a century. It is one of two unresolved disputes — the other being the Kashmir issue — involving the destiny of peoples and their inalienable right of self-determination, with serious implications for world peace and security, which have been on the agenda of the Security Council all these years.

In both cases, there are Security Council resolutions which provide a framework for their implementation, and, unfortunately, in both cases the Council's resolutions remain on the shelf, unimplemented. While in the case of Kashmir, the unimplemented resolutions are decades old, ironically, resolution 1397 (2002) was passed only three weeks ago, and yet we have not moved an inch towards its implementation.

As these resolutions remain unimplemented, peace in both Kashmir and Palestine also remains

elusive, as ever. Violence continues to escalate, oppression continues unabated, and people — in both Kashmir and Palestine — continue to be deprived of their legitimate right of self-determination. While we have waited for this body to act and to implement its own resolutions, the situation has reached alarming proportions.

My Government has expressed its grave concern over the aggressive actions by Israel in surrounding and attacking President Arafat's Ramallah headquarters. The loss of life and injuries resulting from that action simply cannot be justified. Israel's reoccupation of Palestinian Authority territories constitutes a serious threat to regional peace and security and puts in jeopardy the efforts of the international community for the resumption of the peace process.

These and other recent Israeli actions are all the more provocative in view of the Arab League's declaration offering Israel peace, security and recognition in exchange for its complete withdrawal from the territories that it occupied in June 1967.

Pakistan calls upon the international community, and especially this body, which is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security, to urge Israel immediately to halt its attacks on the Palestinian Authority and resume peace negotiations.

Violence only begets violence. Force will not solve any problem. However, our objective should not be to achieve a ceasefire alone. Our objective is actually the attainment of a final peace settlement in the Middle East. The framework for that settlement already exists in all of the recent peace initiatives, in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002), and in the Beirut declaration. Those who have the responsibility to maintain international peace, especially the Security Council, must therefore act, and act now, to realize this objective and save what remains of the hopes for a durable peace in the Middle East.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Tunisia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mejdoub (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, we wish to thank you very warmly for having responded to our request for this emergency meeting.

This meeting was made necessary by the situation prevailing in the occupied Palestinian territories, which have been reoccupied and where a full-fledged war has been unleashed against the Palestinian Authority and its leader, Chairman Arafat. Chairman Arafat is not only being held hostage but also is in danger of being killed by Israel's military, under the command of Prime Minister Sharon, who in the past has been notorious for his policy of oppression and deliberate attacks against civilians, including assassinations.

These large-scale attacks and the direct occupation of territories under Palestinian control demonstrate once again that Mr. Sharon's Government — which became more radicalized during the holding of the historic Arab Summit in Beirut — demonstrate that Israel refuses peace, as it did when the Arab States, meeting in Beirut, held out an offer of comprehensive peace which had elicited the support of the vast majority of States.

Since the Madrid Conference, we have known full well that Mr. Sharon is waiting for any Arab or international initiative that might lead to a just and comprehensive solution of the problem in the Middle East, so that he can sabotage it.

It was no coincidence that Mr. Sharon led a provocative mission to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in September 2000. Indeed, at that very time many peace initiatives were under way, and great strides were being made in the direction of peace.

The reoccupation of territories under Palestinian control is a policy that is tantamount to State terrorism. It is also a means of economically strangling the area. The policy of humiliation and targeted assassinations devised by the Sharon Government in order to deal with developments on the ground is the principal fuel for the mounting frustration and despair of the Palestinian people, who see that the prospects of an entire people have been dimmed.

To put an end to the threat looming as a result of the present situations, all Israeli forces must immediately withdraw from territories under Palestinian authority. The siege on President Yasser Arafat must be lifted immediately and unconditionally: in the eyes of the international community, he remains the very embodiment of the Palestinian people and their legitimate elected leader and representative.

Talks must begin to find a comprehensive solution to the security problem so that peace negotiations can resume. For some time the Palestinian side has demonstrated its wish to negotiate a political solution on the basis of agreed texts and existing arrangements and terms of reference. The Beirut summit aimed to put on the table a unified, comprehensive and clear-cut Arab initiative, consistent with international law, that would promote a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to these problems and would take account of the interests of all the parties.

In this extremely sensitive situation, Tunisia appeals yet again to all the members of the international community to shoulder their responsibility, to rise to the challenge in the occupied territories and to use their influence to put an end to the Israeli campaign of aggression against the Palestinian people. Tunisia reaffirms that international protection must be provided to the Palestinian people. All necessary measures must be taken as soon as possible to guarantee the personal safety of President Arafat, and the siege on him must be lifted. Israel must be compelled to respect international legality and comply with existing agreements. It must respond seriously and responsibly to the current Arab and international peace initiatives.

Tunisia appeals to the Security Council to address this extremely grave and urgent situation with firmness. We call upon the Security Council to seize the historic opportunity offered by the Beirut summit. We must ensure that Israel does not make us miss this rendezvous with history and this wonderful political opportunity.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Morocco. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Bennouna (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting of the Security Council. We hail the ideas put forth by the Secretary-General in his statement to the Council.

The Security Council is meeting today in exceptional circumstances, imposed by the delicate and critical situation in the Middle East: I say "in the Middle East", not only in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Council cannot meet today's Israeli actions with silence. For Israel, it was not enough to have besieged the Palestinian President for nearly four months; it was not enough to have prevented him from attending the Arab summit at Beirut: it has sent its tanks and its special forces to attack the headquarters and offices of the Palestinian President and in large part to destroy them. These acts of aggression against the symbol of resistance, the symbol of the Palestinian State, have unmasked the true face of the present Israeli Government. As Mr. Kofi Annan said at the beginning of this meeting, such an act "will not bring Israel closer to peace" (*supra*); it will bring the region closer to war.

These Israeli acts, just one day after Arab kings and other heads of State or Government offered a peace initiative framed by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, provide yet further proof of the Israeli Government's true intentions in its ongoing attempts to kill the Middle East peace process.

It has been more than a year since the Israeli Government began its methodical policy of creating a new de facto situation in the Middle East on the pretext of security for Israel. Israel has thus escalated its repression of the Palestinian population by blockading them and stifling them economically, by demolishing their homes and by occupying their cities. Even the refugee camps have not been spared. This took place without the Security Council adopting a single resolution to deter Israel.

Amidst all these events and all this frustration, the Council adopted its resolution 1397 (2002), which is the source of some hope. Morocco was among the first countries to welcome that resolution, in which we could discern a glimmer of hope that new life could be breathed into the peace process and that the cycle of violence in the Middle East could be ended. Subsequently, Arab kings and other heads of State or Government met at Beirut and sent a clear message of peace to the international community: the message was "land for peace", putting an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories. Instead of responding positively to the Arab initiative and choosing the path of peace, Israel sent its tanks and troops to commit a direct act of aggression targeting President Arafat.

The international community, and Arab and Islamic countries in particular, as well as all peace-loving peoples, look with hope to the Council to adopt

a resolution commensurate with the critical circumstances in the Middle East. We sincerely hope we will not be disappointed.

Everyone knows Morocco's position with regard to the Middle East. Likewise, everyone is aware of Morocco's efforts to establish a dialogue between the opposing sides in that region. That position is based on Morocco's conviction of the need to coexist and to solve disputes through dialogue and negotiation. Morocco has always been at the forefront of contributing to peace in the Middle East along with all those of good intention. But those efforts were successful only as long as Israel gave the impression that it wanted peace with its neighbours and that it was ready to pay the price for peace, namely, to recognize the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and to withdraw from all Palestinian and Arab territories it occupied in the wake of the June 1967 war, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

I say with all frankness that we all feel pain at seeing innocent civilians — children and women — fall victim to violence, whatever its source. We are all hoping and working to put an end to such acts of violence. The Palestinian people — the besieged and suffocating Palestinian people, whose economy is being blockaded and stifled — have been pushed by the occupation and its practices into frustration and hopelessness. Recent months have shown that violence will not bring an end to violence and that military force and occupation cannot destroy the will of the Palestinian people to live and to achieve their legitimate rights.

The international community and world public opinion await concrete action and a courageous initiative that reflects a genuine will to end the cycle of violence. That must be done by the party with the largest military force in the region, namely, Israel. The international community is also waiting for all those of good intention who can influence events in the region to restore hope to the people in the region and to bring about peace. Morocco, as always, continues to be willing and ready to contribute very positively to that aim.

What we expect from the Security Council is that it demand that Israel stop its aggression immediately, withdraw from the Palestinian territories it has reoccupied, recommit itself to the Madrid principles and respond positively to the most recent Arab initiative. Finally, we should return to the negotiating table as soon as possible and demonstrate the necessary political will to bring about peace to the region.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Turkey. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Cengizer (Turkey): Turkey has aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union. That statement not only laid out the many questions that are currently at the forefront of Turkey's concerns, but also showed a sensible way out of the very worrisome and worsening situation in the Middle East. That being the case, I am taking the floor only to emphasize a number of points that are, from our perspective, of particular importance.

Before I take up those points, I wish to salute Secretary-General Kofi Annan and thank him for a historic speech that stressed hope at this very critical juncture. Indeed, we should find ways to penalize extremists rather than play into the hands of those who perpetrate acts of terror, and see to it that hope prevails over dismay.

Turkey is increasingly worried about this tragic cycle of violence. The suicide bombing in Netanya and the ensuing events followed the cold-blooded murder of a ranking Turkish member of the temporary international presence in Hebron and that of a Swiss member, while another Turkish member was wounded. We will not rest until a full investigation is completed and the perpetrators of this cowardly act are brought to justice.

We strongly condemn all acts of terror. We are horrified by the scenes of innocent civilians in baths of blood. We cannot think of any reason that can justify repeated brutal acts of violence perpetrated against innocent civilians.

This vicious cycle of violence and reprisal defines the immediate problem: there is no imperative more important and more urgent than the immediate cessation of all acts of violence. This is the cornerstone of Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), which was adopted only three weeks ago. It is all the more so if the vision of a region where two States will live side by side in peace is to be realized in good time.

Chairman Arafat's leadership is now more central than ever. He is the legitimate leader of the Palestinians; hence, he is the only interlocutor with Israel in the quest for a political settlement. After all, no one can imagine a military solution to this conflict.

As true friends of the glorious and historic Jewish and Arab nations and as witnesses to their great historic and defining moments, it is incumbent upon us, Mr. President, to ask where they are going and which way they wish to take. We have listened with dismay as Chairman Arafat talked of his wish to become a martyr. His becoming a martyr would not serve any purpose. Likewise, we do not see the purpose of the siege of his headquarters. Rather, he should be rendered the capacity to act as the leader of his people. Martyrdom in a headquarters under siege cannot be an end; it will curse generations to come. It is not acts of self-annihilation, but of statesmanship, that are required from both parties right now.

The representative of Israel declared a while ago that his Government had no intention of occupying territory under the control of the Palestinian Authority. He also said that the road to peace could be walked together. We welcome this statement. But, at the same time, Israel, when defending itself, should show restraint and listen to the calls made by the international community, as well as take into account the increased pace of the quest for a just and viable peace in the Middle East, most recently demonstrated by the Arab Summit in Beirut. As a matter of fact, every passing day shows the inherent value of both the Mitchell report and the Tenet plan. These should be implemented forthwith.

Turkey, as always, is ready to bring whatever contribution it can to ease the way to peace. Today, as was the case at other moments of destiny, there is cause for fear and abandonment — and there is cause for hope and courage. Once again, it is about the road to be taken. We believe both parties know which road they should take and how to strengthen their grip on hope. Today an Israeli and a Palestinian are born under the same star at the same hour. As Rabindranath Tagore has said, every newborn shows that God continues to believe in us.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Cuba. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, allow me, first of all, to convey my delegation's congratulations to you for the excellent manner in which you have guided the work of the Council during the month of March and to thank you for convening this meeting.

Once again the Security Council has to meet on an emergency basis in order to examine the deplorable consequences of a conflict that has lasted for several decades without any just and honourable solution being found to the satisfaction of all parties. The escalation of violence has reached unprecedented levels of danger in the dramatic and sorrowful history of this conflict.

Those of us who have been following the events of recent hours see a veritable nightmare that begs us to ask different questions. From virtual house arrest we have moved to armed aggression against the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. How much longer will the Security Council flagrantly shirk its responsibilities? How much longer will we be victims of paralysing vetoes or the threat of vetoes that prevent this organ, supposedly entrusted with carrying out functions clearly enshrined in the United Nations Charter as regards peacekeeping and international security, from taking immediate and emergency measures? In addition to the genocide that has been committed for so many years against an oppressed and occupied people, are we now to allow regicide to occur? The paralysis of the Council with respect to the question of Palestine and the Middle East in general is manifest not only when it fails to adopt resolutions that are urgently needed, but also when it fails to act to ensure compliance with those that it has already adopted.

The cycle of uncontrolled violence has reached unheard levels. We wonder how many more deaths there will be, how much more suffering and destruction before we put an end to this escalation of violence. Is it even possible? My delegation reiterates the need to establish a protection force or some other analogous, impartial mechanism that can protect the civilian population, observe the ceasefire and monitor the situation on the ground.

Cuba fully supports the heroic struggle of the Arab people, and the Palestinian people in particular, against Israel's occupation and aggression. We feel solidarity with their resistance and their rebellion. We reiterate our condemnation of all suicidal acts with

bombs or other acts against Israeli civilians, who become innocent victims of their Government's policy. We also reject the clumsy manipulation being made of these isolated acts in order to attempt to justify the disproportionate response by an army that is equipped and funded by the United States of America and that, with the most modern means, is trying to crush the spirit of rebellion of the heroic Palestinian people in its struggle to gain the exercise of its most legitimate rights.

Cuba demands full respect for the physical integrity and dignity of President Arafat. We demand the immediate and unconditional cessation of Israeli aggression against the headquarters of the Palestinian National Authority in Ramallah and the re-establishment of power and telecommunications service to the offices of President Arafat, whose example of valour and struggle have already found a page in history.

Presidential statements that solve nothing are not enough, nor are hollow commitments and new promises that are never kept. The Security Council must act decisively and firmly. It must discharge its obligations without delay or it will quite simply cloak itself in shame once again by virtue of its impotence.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Saudi Arabia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for responding positively to the request for an emergency meeting of the Security Council to discuss the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. It is a situation that is getting worse by the hour. Blood is being shed and innocent people are being killed. Hatred is deepening, and the problem is becoming more complicated. We are facing a very serious situation, which makes it imperative for the Security Council to intervene to stop the violence, destruction and killing, to call for an immediate withdrawal by Israeli forces from the Palestinian cities.

The Israeli troops going into Palestinian cities are not going to achieve security for Israel. It only reaffirms the true intentions behind the Israeli occupation and aggression, accompanied by the horror faced by the civilians. The killing of innocent victims and the demolition of installations will not solve the problem, nor stop the violence or counter-violence.

Previously, we reaffirmed before the Council that the Middle East question is not a security problem but an unjust, illegal occupation of Arab territories. Therefore, we cannot discuss the Middle East from a security perspective only. It has to be coupled with a political solution that will achieve a full withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, in accordance with international law and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

The Arab Summit just held in Lebanon adopted the initiative of the Crown Prince Abdullah ibn Abdul-Aziz, an initiative that was welcomed by all countries and that offered a glimmer of hope and a practical solution to a conflict that is now more than half a century old. The Arab Summit affirmed the aspiration of all Arab countries to achieve peace and security for all the peoples and countries of the region, to live in friendship and as good neighbours, to establish normal relations after a full Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, to establish an independent Palestinian State with its capital in Jerusalem, and to find a fair solution to the question of refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (1948).

The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia affirmed in his statement at the Arab summit that Israel is making a most serious mistake if it thinks that it can impose an unjust peace on the Arabs through force of arms. Peace is an agreement freely entered into between two equal parties. No peace based on oppression, suppression or injustice can endure. The peace process was based on the unambiguous principle of land for peace. This basis was accepted by the entire international community and was embodied in Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It was adopted in the Madrid Conference of 1991, and it was affirmed by the Security Council in resolution 1397 (2002).

We call upon the Security Council to assume its responsibility in accordance with the United Nations Charter, to intervene to stop Israeli aggression, to put an end to violence and stop the bloodshed, and to create an atmosphere allowing the parties concerned to resume peace negotiations on all tracks. The Council must adopt a resolution that would stop all acts of aggression, lead to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Palestinian cities, implement the Tenet plan and the Mitchell recommendations and reaffirm resolution 1397 (2002).

I would be remiss if I did not refer here to the efforts and good offices of the Secretary-General and the efforts by his representatives in the Middle East to help the parties concerned to stop acts of violence and resume peace negotiations.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of India. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Gopinathan (India): Mr. President, we thank you for convening this emergency meeting of the Council. We also thank the Secretary-General for his statement to the Council today on the sharp deterioration of the situation in the Middle East.

We are meeting this evening in extraordinary circumstances. The Council expressed the collective will of the international community only a fortnight ago in resolution 1397 (2002), which outlined the vision of two States living in peace within secure borders. Only yesterday, the Summit of the Arab League States in Beirut adopted the resolution supporting the peace plan put forward by the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. All of us thought that the push towards peace in the Middle East had acquired significant momentum through this action of the Arab League. Today, we seem to have moved far away from that vision. The needless escalation of violence in the region is unwarranted and is a cause of deepest concern.

We call for an end to the violence and for the resumption of peaceful dialogue and negotiations in order to realize the vision of two States living in peace within secure boundaries in accordance with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and subsequent accords agreed to and accepted by the parties.

President Arafat continues to remain for all of us the embodiment of Palestinian nationhood. The way President Arafat is being treated is shocking. We do not see how the siege of President Arafat and today's military operations aimed at his headquarters can in any way contribute to the eventual cessation of violence or greater security.

My delegation reiterates our call for an end to the violence and the immediate resumption of dialogue and negotiations so as to achieve lasting peace and security for all in the region. We call upon the Council to express the collective will of the international community, once again in less than three weeks, for immediate resumption of such a dialogue.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine, who wishes to make a further brief statement.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): Very briefly, I wish to make one additional comment to be included in the records of our meeting.

We convey our official condolences to the Governments of Turkey and Switzerland on the deaths of two members of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron. Our condolences also go out to the families and colleagues of the victims. We greatly appreciate the efforts and work of all personnel of that group and we strongly condemn the killing of two of its members, which we firmly believe to have been committed by the Israeli army. However, the Palestinian Authority has openly declared its acceptance of an international investigation into this event and reiterates that position before the Council.

Once again, we extend our condolences on the deaths of the two members and of all innocent foreigners who have lost their lives, including the Italian journalist killed a few days ago.

The President: There are no further speakers remaining on my list.

The meeting was suspended at 10.55 p.m. on Friday, 29 March and resumed at 4.25 a.m. on Saturday, 30 March 2002.

The President: Members of the Council have before them document S/2002/333, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Norway.

I would like to state that it is the common understanding of the members of the Security Council that operative paragraph 1 does not indicate any sequence of the elements listed.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

Does any member of the Council wish to make a statement before the voting?

That does not seem to be the case.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bulgaria, Cameroon, China, Colombia, France, Guinea, Ireland, Mauritius, Mexico, Norway, Russian Federation, Singapore, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: There were 14 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 1402 (2002).

[One member was not present during the vote (Syrian Arab Republic).]

Does any member of the Council wish to make a statement after the voting?

That does not seem to be the case.

I give the floor to the representative of Israel, who has asked to make a statement.

Mr. Lancry (Israel) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this renewed opportunity to take the floor. Consideration of the resolution that has just been adopted prompts us to make a few brief comments.

The reference to resolution 1397 (2002), in particular the appeal for an immediate ceasefire and for the implementation of the Tenet plan and the Mitchell recommendations, as well as, in this context, in-depth cooperation with General Zinni, are positive elements, and we therefore welcome them.

Having said that, I would like to add that appealing to Israel to withdraw from Ramallah and other Palestinian cities without an equivalent appeal to the Palestinian side to put an end to the suicide attacks and to destroy the terrorist infrastructure misrepresents the nature of the Israeli operation, which is one of legitimate self-defence. In so doing, the Security Council is rewarding the Palestinian terrorists. We condemn that; we cannot accept it.

Furthermore, the resolution in no way reflects the spirit and letter of resolution 1373 (2002), because — only 48 hours after the Easter massacre — there is not even a hint about the measures that must be taken by the Palestinian Authority to eradicate the terrorist networks. We deplore the fact that the issue has been handled in that manner.

In conclusion, I would like to restate the Israeli Government's willingness to cooperate with General Zinni in order to return, as soon as possible, to a ceasefire and to negotiation.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to reiterate our thanks to the members of the Security Council for their prompt response to our invitation and the invitation of the Arab Group to consider the seriously deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. We would also like to reiterate our thanks to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his important and useful contributions to the work of the Security Council all day today. We would also like to express our appreciation for the seriousness with which the members of the Council considered the Arab draft that was submitted to the Council during the consultations on the various texts.

We believe that Council resolution 1402 (2002) represents an important step that could make a positive contribution to halting the deterioration of the situation and bringing about the desired objectives, particularly the Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian cities, including Ramallah. We had hoped for a stronger text than the one that has been adopted today. We had also hoped, of course, that events would take a different course. Nevertheless, the Palestinian side will abide by the provisions of the resolution, and calls upon Israel to declare a similar position, with a view to immediately implementing the provisions of the resolution. Regrettably, we have just listened to a negative position, although it is not new on the part of Israel. It is a position that constitutes a new challenge by the forces of occupation to your Council. I am afraid this position will impose on you additional measures if the Council is to perform its duty in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. At this moment, however, we will remain optimistic in the hope that the serious deterioration will come to an end and that we will truly see the implementation of the provisions of this resolution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: We affirmed in our statement this afternoon that there was an Arab Summit that adopted a peace initiative to end the Arab-Israeli conflict and to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in accordance with the resolutions of international legality. We had great hope that the Council would start its resolutions in the wake of that initiative on the Middle East with a resolution that would take into consideration and include that historic Arab Summit resolution on achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

But it is clear that the resolution before us is only a repetition of resolution 1397 (2002), on which we abstained, while there is a resolution adopted by the Arab Summit that deals with the peace process as a whole. Consequently we thought that the Council would deal with that resolution if there was any real, serious intent to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

The Arab Summit resolution has also affirmed the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. Syria supported that initiative and the establishment of that State, as has been clarified by the Arab peace initiative. Therefore, we believe that dealing with this very serious issue in this manner and in such haste, without even giving us time to consult with our capitals, is not an example we should follow as a way of dealing with things in the Council.

It is clear that the resolution before us does not take into consideration the positive outcome of the Arab Summit. It is selective; it does not condemn the Israeli attacks against the Palestinian people, but it condemns the bombings. It links an immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian territories, even naming them "Palestinian cities", to a ceasefire. This means that a withdrawal cannot be effected until the Palestinian Authority has implemented a ceasefire. Consequently, the resolution again treats the victim and the criminal equally.

In addition, we do not find any condemnation of the Israeli terrorism in this resolution, about which we talked today in different ways and forms. In its operative paragraph 1 it calls for a "meaningful ceasefire", instead of asking Israel to withdraw immediately from occupied Arab territories.

We were hopeful that the Council would really — and we have made all efforts in that respect — keep its unity by not referring to resolution 1397 (2002), on which we have clarified our position completely and did not accept. This resolution does not fulfil even the minimum aspirations that we have; therefore it came out in very weak language. It does not achieve the aspirations of the Arab Group, and it does not help in dealing with the explosive situation in the region in a drastic manner.

Based on all these considerations, we did not take part in the voting on this draft resolution.

The President: The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.40 a.m.